Spinoza



Baruch Spinoza

Spinoza

Portrait of a Spiritual Hero

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With an Introduction
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TO

THE MEMORY OF

MY PARENTS

He who loves God cannot expect God to love him in return.

SPINOZA

Spinoza is one of those great men whose eminence grows more obvious with the lapse of years.

GEORGE SANTAYANA

Introduction

MEN OF INSIGHT and sensitivity, assailed by the frightful events of these times, can hardly ward off a feeling of despondency and isolation. The confidence in the sure and constant progress of mankind that inspired people in the nineteenth century has given way to a crippling disillusionment. No one, it may be presumed, can deny the progress made in the realm of knowledge and in the field of technological invention; but we have experienced the disillusioning fact that all these advancements have not essentially alleviated the hardships of man's destiny; nor have they ennobled his actions. The habit of casual interpretation of all phenomena, including those in the psychic and social spheres, has deprived the more wide-awake intellectual of the feeling of security and of those consolations which traditional religion, founded on authority, offered to earlier generations. It is a kind of banishment from a paradise of childlike innocence.

Such, in brief, is the description of the distress experienced by the thinking man of our time. Often he escapes from this misery into a fancifully superior skepticism, or into distractions of all kinds which keep him from coming to his senses. But the effort is vain. We cannot in the long run substitute narcotics for wholesome nourishment.

On the whole, we learn very little about how people wrestle with this situation, unless we happen to be psychiatrists; and even they, as a rule, gain an insight into the travail of only those individuals who may lack the strength of resolving this spiritual conflict by themselves. Except for such instances, we know very little about the way in which our contemporaries settle the problem of their relationship as individuals to the hard facts of given conditions, both human and extra-human, so that they may arrive at that inner peace and security without which no kind of harmonious existence or work is possible. Furthermore, there are only a few individuals whose inner clarity is such as might enable them to impart their own subjective experiences to their fellow men in comprehensible form.

Hence, it is of great importance for the people of our time to become acquainted with the lives and struggles of those eminent personalities who have endured and overcome this same spiritual distress, and whose life story and life work can afford us a penetrating insight into this heroic conflict.

Among such personalities, Baruch Spinoza is one of the most outstanding. That is why it is so gratifying to have the author of this book acquaint us with the life and struggles of such a man. The author views Spinoza not so much with the critical eye of the professional philosopher as with that of the sympathetic historian who has an intuitive comprehension of the motive forces operative within that pure and lonely spirit. Naturally, the reading of this book cannot replace a close study of Spinoza's own

works, but it brings Spinoza's personality near to us and thus facilitates the effort of penetrating into his thought.

Although he lived three hundred years before our time, the spiritual situation with which Spinoza had to cope peculiarly resembles our own. The reason for this is that he was utterly convinced of the causal dependence of all phenomena, at a time when the success accompanying the efforts to achieve a knowledge of the causal relationship of natural phenomena was still quite modest. Spinoza's conviction extended not only to inanimate nature but also to human feelings and actions. He had no doubt that our notion of possessing a free will (i.e. independent of causality) was an illusion resulting from our ignorance of the causes operative within us. In the study of this causal relationship he saw a remedy for fear, hate and bitterness, the only remedy to which a genuinely spiritual man can have recourse. He demonstrated his justification for this conviction not only by the clear, precise formulation of his thoughts, but also by the exemplary fashioning of his own life.

ALBERT EINSTEIN

Only a free man knows no deceit,
and all his dealings are righteous.
—SPINOZA

Preface

I

THE PHILOSOPHICAL literature on the subject of Spinozism is well-nigh limitless; but the biographical literature concerning Baruch Despinoza is limited indeed; for his was a quiet and earnest life, spent in a humble Dutch setting.

Since the days of the old biographers: Lucas, Colerus, Kortholt and Bayle, down to the works of Freudenthal, Vloten, Meinsma, Dunin, Borkowski and Gebhardt, there have been a number of biographical essays, a good deal of research and even several romantic libretti without music. Of all of these, the most important, no doubt, is the work of Freudenthal. But Spinoza's life was something more than a series of accidentally known facts, and more than just a preliminary to one of the greatest philosophical achievements in history. It was a spiritual life almost unparalleled in its exemplariness, its fullness of suffering and strife, and its inexorable logic. This poor Jewish thinker lived a life that provided an object lesson for all those who live by the spirit, a life that was a mighty fusion of the here and the hereafter, combining the torments of hell with heavenly aspiration. Personally, he was not preoccupied overmuch with his earthly existence. True, he did not

try to avoid the pleasures, joys and sorrows of this world, but neither did he give them undue consideration; for greater and nobler things awaited him.

Spinoza's life was heroic in a higher and deeper sense than that of actual deeds; and it stimulates us more intensely and moves us more profoundly than those lives in which activities are directed only toward success. It stirs the emotion and interest of all those who have won riches from poverty, strength from yearning and purity from suffering. "Spinoza and Christ, only in these two does a true knowledge of God exist." Thus Carl von Dalberg wrote, in a letter to Herder.

A sublime purity of heart and a firm belief in spiritual values were necessary for him to overcome the obstacles which, at every step, were placed in his way. Only deep humility and fortitude in suffering made it possible for him to persevere and go on living. Behind the objectivity and coolness of his thinking, and behind his endeavor to efface himself completely in his work, was concealed a boundless passion which eschewed personal confession and lyricism, existing as an inner ardor, an intense glow within the cool atmosphere of his being. It was this passion that impetuously fought Spinoza's weaponless battle against want, illness and the insatiable hatred that surged up against him time and again.

We see him before us clearly: the pale, sickly, youthful face surmounting the small, black-clad figure. With every look, every feeling and every thought, he left his personal cares behind him and strode through a world in conflagration. He soared far out into an invisible empyrean toward

his one and only goal, the quest for truth. With him he carried the burdensome heritage of his race and the stupendous task of propagating a new spirit amidst the violent controversies that swept like stormy music through the intellectual life of his century.

The northern Baroque spirit had erected its stage in the Netherlands; and almost contemporaneously, three great tragedies were enacted upon it, tragedies in which the creative individual went along his way to Calvary, to the bitter end. They were the tragedies of the artist, Rembrandt; the statesman, Jan de Witt; and the philosopher, Baruch Spinoza.

They were all of them imbued with an awareness of the Baroque spirit with its new, open vistas and its belief in freedom, bequeathed to it by the preceding century. And, in all three, there also lived the contradictions of their era with its mystical seeking after God and its rigorous rationalism, its belligerent spirit of the Counter-Reformation and its far-ranging human aspiration. All three men were not understood by their contemporaries; they were rendered powerless, or were put to death. Their lives were filled to the brim with a loneliness which they themselves created and of which they themselves were the martyrs. There was just as much difference in their appearance and careers as there was similarity in the goals they passionately sought: the same love of freedom, the same gentle devotion to the sufferings of mankind, the same deep piety far exceeding the narrow bounds of churches and dogmas, and the same clear vision of the spirit of reason.

Passion glowed more intensely in the artist's paintings than in the lives of the other two; the eyes of his subjects were sadder; they were closer to earth. His pictures were expressive of a piety that did not depend on theological doctrine but on the sublime and harrowing visions of Revelation. The statesman, in thought and deed, expressed the era's faith in freedom, its faith in man and his intellectual and moral reason. It was the destiny of Jan de Witt to revive the heroic temper of classical antiquity upon the stage of his century and his republic. He saw the fear of freedom rising within the people—Spinoza, too, recognized it as a future peril—and himself became the victim of this tragic fear. All these tendencies were then combined in the philosopher, who was imbued with piety and with faith in freedom, with a passion for, and with trust in, the spirit of reason. The further they pursued their careers, the closer they approached one another, these three contemporary brothers in sorrow. Each one proclaimed, in his own medium, the blessings and the hopes of the century; but they could not stem the disaster. In order to fulfill their mission they were obliged to suffer. They were terribly alone, and they died alone. Loneliest of all was Jan de Witt, who died in the midst of the frenzied mob for whose freedom he had fought; and they stood by and let his blood trickle into the gutter. Spinoza's solitude was the gentlest and most blessed of all.

Within the "One in All" his thoughts abide;
Amore Dei, mind beatified—
Go barefoot here! 'Tis ground thrice sanctified!

—NIETZSCHE

He died in the humble room to which he had long been accustomed, having completed his work.

II

It is significant in connection with Spinoza that the greatness of his intellectual stature was first reexperienced by a man whose spirit was of equal purity, clarity and solitude. Because of his own character Gotthold Ephraim Lessing understood Spinoza. That great, indomitable figure, who was always benign even in the midst of the most violent intellectual controversy, and who saw the human aspect behind the writings and deeds of others, openly became a staunch convert to Spinoza's doctrines at a time when the latter was still being referred to as a "dead dog." Across the gulf of a century Lessing sensed his kinship to Spinoza, a kinship which would have been a joy to Spinoza had he been living then; for Lessing understood the spirit of his work, and the heart within that spirit, and the mystery within that heart.

Spinoza was a mystery to his friends. They were unable to influence his destiny. They asked him for guidance; but there was no mingling of their lives with his. It couldn't have been otherwise; for Spinoza's mind had a loftier range, and his yearning was deeper than theirs. They came to him and gratefully accepted his wisdom because there was need of leadership in those chaotic times. But when it came to those profoundest and gravest questions that beset the human soul, they left him to his solitude. How could it have been otherwise? Spinoza was

well aware of this, but his loneliness rarely caused him any pain or anxiety. The perfection of his work was also the perfection of truth. And truth was all that mattered, not the ambition of achieving greatness. "I do not presume that I have found the best philosophy, but I do know that I have recognized the true one." He never thought of fame. The further his path led, the more he was liberated from himself. And when he was quite certain of the truth, it overwhelmed him, as divine tidings might overwhelm a prophet.

Spinoza's former biographers have often been reproached because it was necessary to reinterpret their factual information psychologically. They provided a correct account of the facts but could not fathom the mystery in the man. And yet, this mystery is not only implicit in the occurrences, the casual events and the achievements of his life; it is also present in the totality of his life's work. To be sure, a man's destiny is never entirely revealed. It must be guessed at and ferreted out from the dark penumbra of life. The history of a man is just as little the history of his actions as it is the history of his external existence. The abode of his spirit is always concealed; and yet, it is here that his destiny is unfolded. Spinoza's destiny is the drama of a spiritual hero. It is not a drama of great deeds or of a mighty conflict between opposing wills; it is rather a drama of inner stillness and of the enchanting beauty of a holy legend. In order to portray this drama it is not necessary to invent a plot. Industrious scholars have collected and sorted the material for us. But if we wish to hear a man's heart beating behind this material, we must

be able to listen long and carefully to the inner music of his soul. And that is the intention of this book.

The story of a man of the spirit reads more quietly than that of a man of action, but it is richer in suggestion and mystery. The way to action stems from the human will; but the way of the spirit stems from the heart. In no other life is this truth so forcefully, so stirringly and so purely revealed as in the life of Spinoza.

Spinoza

Viva la fé!
Long live faith!

CHAPTER ONE

The Story of the Marranos

I

ON THE 22nd of April, 1593, the city of Amsterdam witnessed a strange sight. A small group of about ten men, women and children were huddled together in front of the Monkelbaens Tower. They all had pale faces and timid eyes that had become accustomed to be on the look-out for secret persecutors and their bloodthirsty henchmen. They were all garbed in strange-looking clothes and spoke the soft foreign language of some southern country, a language that no one understood. Like a ship arriving in port under an unknown flag, they had landed on this street. At some distance, the Dutchmen, shaking their heads, regarded their strange guests, who had put their little bundles on the ground in front of them, and who were standing close together, paying no attention to the good-natured questions and glances of the inhabitants. More and more people ran up, forming an inquisitive and expectant circle around this heterogeneous center. From the windows of the neighboring houses, eager faces looked down upon the silent little group of dark-eyed strangers standing there motionlessly. A few Dutchmen, broad of

stature and deliberate in their movements and in their speech, finally stepped up quite close to the strangers, trying to catch a few words of their conversation. They felt it necessary to inform themselves about these people; for those were turbulent times, and the country was menaced on all sides. With surprise on their faces, the investigators returned to their friends. "They speak a language that sounds like Latin. They must be scholars; we saw their bundles and their coat pockets crammed full of books."

Slowly the little group of strangers began to stir. The oldest one of them had given an order, and they all followed him like a herd following its leader. But they did not go far away, only as far as Jonker Street, where they entered a house situated directly opposite the Tower. Here they disappeared and, for weeks, remained hidden from the residents of the street. There were gossip and rumors; and prying glances searched around the old house with its new secret. But no one was able to say anything definite. The house had swallowed up its strange guests; and slowly, the people of Amsterdam grew accustomed to the fact. The strangers' secret became a part of the diversified, industrious life of the big city, a part of its work, its destiny and its dreams.

Gradually the mystery began to clear as new guests arrived at the house on Jonker Street. These newcomers recognized the house they were seeking by secret markings that had been inscribed on the wall. They came from the Frisian town of Emden. Soon they were on fairly good terms with the Dutchmen, who observed them

keenly, questioned them and gathered a multitude of impressions and conjectures. But the simple Dutch burghers whispered so long and excitedly about dark and forbidden rites that were supposedly being celebrated in the house on Jonker Street, that the administrative authorities finally intervened. And, as a result, some light was thrown on the secret of the strangers and the house in which they dwelt. The truth was then disclosed; and later other facts became known, some of the details, no doubt, embellished by legend. It was a moving story, replete with sweetness and piety, adventure and humility. Three pious chroniclers—Daniel Levi de Barrios, Uri Halevi and David Franco Mendez—have recorded the events of those extraordinary days when the first Marranos entered the land of the Dutch people to find a new home and return to an old religion. What they have told us is the following:

In Spain and Portugal, the Jews, who had been baptized by force, led a life of anguish. For generations they had belonged to the Catholic Church, which, however, did not wish to consider them as Christians, that is, in the same light as its other sons and daughters. They were called "New Christians," or, with malevolent derision, "Marranos," that is, the "damned ones," or "swine." Their houses were searched; they were spied upon to discover who among them still secretly adhered to Judaism. They were turned over to the Inquisition, imprisoned, burned at the stake and condemned to eternal perdition.

At that time, however, there lived among the Marranos a courageous woman by the name of Mayor Rodri-

guez, who could no longer endure the misery and fear of her dear ones. She prevailed upon her children, Manuel and Maria, their uncle, Miguel Lopez, and other Marranos, to embark on a vessel bound for Holland, where they might begin a new and peaceful life. It was smooth sailing at first, but they soon ran into heavy gales and storms. As if that weren't enough, they were involuntarily involved in the war which was raging between England and Spain at that time. An English vessel halted the emigrant ship, which was sailing under Spanish-Portuguese colors. The Marranos disclosed the motive and the destination of their voyage to the foreign officer, an English duke. The duke, however, had eyes only for the wondrously beautiful, nineteen-year-old Maria Nunez. After he had taken his prisoners to England, he at once led the foreign girl, whose language he did not understand, to Queen Elizabeth. The English Queen had her conveyed in the royal carriage through the streets of London in order to display this rare, southern beauty to her subjects. Maria, however, would not give ear to the duke's declaration of love. She spurned the wealth of England and the duke's castles, expressing but one desire: to go aboard the ship again with her own people and to sail for Amsterdam, where she would devote herself forever to Judaism. The Queen listened to her plea, and released the prisoners and their vessel.

Other Marrano emigrants came to grief at sea, on their way to Amsterdam. Their ship sprang a leak, and only with difficulty were they able to reach the Frisian port of Emden. On a house in this town they noticed some

Hebrew letters with a Latin translation below, which signified that truth and freedom were the foundation of the universe. Into this house, belonging to the Jewish scholar, Moses Uri Halevi, the strangers, led by Jacob Tirado, entered. They disclosed their origin and their desire to give up their pseudo-Christianity and to go back to the Judaism of their forefathers. Halevi advised them to go to Amsterdam, where he would soon follow them. There he would admit them all into Judaism. These were the strangers who had gathered together in front of the Monkelbaens Tower, which they later renamed "The Tower of Aaron."

When the burgomaster of the city of Amsterdam heard of this extraordinary tale and the dangerous designs of these people to found a home for the Jewish religion in his city, he had Moses Uri Halevi and his son put into prison. But they were soon liberated when the Dutchmen heard of the alleged wealth of these Spaniards and their intention of transforming Amsterdam into a flourishing center of commerce. They permitted them freedom of worship, and later on allowed them to build a temple, the first Jewish house of worship in that land. So they settled in Amsterdam and became Jews; but nevertheless they still remained Portuguese and Spaniards, true to their southern language and to their ancestral ways of thinking.

Other emigrants followed, bringing harrowing tales from Spain and Portugal. The Inquisition raged on, strewing ashes and death over their most glorious memories. The illustrious past and the bloody present strengthened the solidarity of these emigrants, whose thoughts still

seemed to be more deeply engrossed in yesterday than in tomorrow, more in Spain than in Holland. Some of them traced their origin as much to Spanish as to Jewish blood, and had grown up in close association with the Church and the Spanish Empire. Alonso de Herrera, for example, happened to have been Spanish Governor of Morocco; his ancestor, Gonsolvo de Cordova, was the conqueror of Naples. Now they had all become Jews, and they wanted to be Jews and nothing else. Old men, who had never known any other rites than those of the Catholic Church, were circumcised, instructed in Hebrew, in the Bible, the Talmud, and in the prayers of the Synagogue; and they sought a reunion with traditions from which they had been estranged for generations. Halevi and his son became their first teachers and rabbis. Later the Portuguese congregation (so called because of the fact that most of its members had sailed from Portuguese harbors) brought their rabbis from the old Sephardic congregations of the south, such as those of Venice, Salonica and Fez.

In those days, Holland was acknowledged by all as the asylum of religious freedom and as a peaceful haven for the harried and the persecuted. The Treaty of Utrecht, in the year 1579, had guaranteed non-interference in the freedom of conscience of Holland's inhabitants. Thus the Marranos also found freedom for their faith; yet they continued their religious existence underground. The oppression of the Inquisition still weighed on their souls, and a wall of fear seemed to surround them while they were fulfilling the obligations of the faith of their fathers. They

did not seem to realize the fact that they were in a Protestant land which was in opposition to Rome. These secret religious practices of the Marranos gave rise to a strange paradox, in that they were suspected of being Papists. When, in 1596, armed soldiers disturbed the Portuguese Congregation as it was secretly and timidly celebrating the Day of Atonement, a rumor was circulated that the Inquisition would now also begin in Amsterdam. As a matter of fact, however, the soldiers had been looking for Catholic paraphernalia such as crucifixes, sacred images and eucharistic bread. The explanation of this mistake resulted in a public and official recognition of the congregation; and this enabled them to build the "House of Jacob," as they called their first synagogue.

Thus, they stood midway between peoples, churches and eras. Their consciousness of that epoch was deeply impressed upon the souls of the Marranos, who experienced in their own lives the tensions and explosive outbursts that then prevailed. "Those times struck like a pointed arrow into my heart; my kidneys were riven within me," wailed a contemporary sage, Don Jehuda Abrabanel, who was called Leone Ebreo. The Marranos possessed a much more liberal education than was customary among their Dutch contemporaries, who were engaged in the trades, handicrafts and practical pursuits. The Marranos were artisans and merchants too; but primarily they were physicians, jurists and poets. They spoke Spanish, Portuguese and French, and were then learning Hebrew and Dutch. They felt themselves allied with the Protestant Reformation and with the struggle against the Catholic

Church, which had murdered their fathers, sisters and brothers, and had robbed them of their home. The new religion of Protestantism was also close to their own Jewish convictions, because in both there was no priestly intermediation between man and the revelations of God. With inquisitive eyes they bent their gaze on the new era; and yet they could not, neither then nor ever, forget their glorious and bloody past; wherein at first they had been pious teachers and students of the Torah and of Greek philosophy; and had then become Christians and high dignitaries of the Church and of the Empire; and in the end, frightened seekers after God and peace, they had been consigned to the execution pyre.

In their Spanish and Portuguese homes the Marranos had also been called *Nuevos Cristianos,* "New Christians." In Holland they became "New Jews." This "newness" remained a dangerous symbol for them, a symbol not only of their religious faith but also of an existence which was continually on the look-out, forever restless, forever living between different homes. They were novices and seekers, students and thinkers. They were always ready to receive every new message of revelation and of redemption; and yet, they knew no security nor stability of existence. Nothing seemed so strange to them as the smug complacency of the self-satisfied burghers. Their own lives had always been either those of lords, princes and teachers, or those of martyrs, saints and outcasts. The Marrano could only love the exorbitant, the extreme passions and violent episodes of history. His imagination and memory were filled with scenes of downfall and anni-

hilation, of violent suffering and death, of the warring powers of Heaven and of Hell.

But the history of the Marranos also had another effect: doubt and skepticism. They had had to die for the truth of the Christian religion; but for the truth of the Jewish religion a new home had been opened up to them. The Church of the Inquisition had burned the Marranos alive, burned men, women and children, burned them in honor of the gentle God of charity! Where was the truth in this? Where was its sense or humanity? Thus, doubt had to become the heritage of the Marranos. From the Spanish-Jewish Middle Ages, the work of Maimonides had come down to them, bearing a strange title: "Guide for the Perplexed." They were indeed perplexed seekers, forever on the edge of some precipice, forever in search of light and enlightenment, forever overshadowed by the gloom of their existence. The last bright light that their homeland had offered them had been from the flames of the *autos-da-fé.*

But Maimonides also spoke of another kind of light. "Divine Providence governs every man, in uninterrupted continuity; this gift, everyone who so desires can always have at his disposal. A man who turns his thoughts away from frivolous things, who arrives at a knowledge of God in the right way, and feels himself blessed by it, can come to no evil; for then he is with God, and God is with him. Should he, however, turn his thoughts away from God, then God is far from him, and he is far from God; and is thus subject to every possible evil. For the special Divine Providence which protects us from the ocean of chance, is

the result of that same divine, spiritual gift." Thus, for them the spirit was their blessing, reflection their law. The unrest arising from their doubt and skepticism made them creative; but security and permanence became such distant ideals that they were hardly visible to them. With profound fervor and piety, they found their way back to the holy traditions of their forefathers; but they also desired to collaborate in the interpretation of a new, unsuspected and, as yet, unformed historical era. They were old and young at the same time; worshippers and thinkers, always believing and always doubting, always remembering an old life and always dreaming of a new one. For they were Marranos!

II

History certainly did not spare them in anything. It showed them every Paradise and every Hell, every blessing and every humiliation. With a past such as theirs, they could not have developed into a mediocre people, but only into a people that bore the mystery of life and death deep within their blood.

The generation of Spanish Jews witnessed and was victim of one of the most frightful and most violent epochs of European history. They had brought the original word of God and the old community into the life of their exile, into a land which, more than any other, was in the stormy throes of religious warfare and of conquest. Countries were destroyed, civilizations annihilated, empires founded and then laid low into dust,—but the Spanish Jews sur-

vived. They had been both tortured and exalted beyond measure; they had been admired, mistrusted, insulted, derided and murdered. But in spite of all, they were not annihilated; and for every death among them there was a resurrection. They had survived the Visigoths, the dominion of the Arian and Roman faiths, and the invasion of the Mohammedan Arabs, who were in sympathy with them and intellectually allied with them. They became the victims of religious fanaticism at the time of the Crusades; and they were seized upon by demagogues who cast them as prey to the mobs which were incited by war, pestilence and rage. The more turbulent the times, the quieter this stalwart community of thinkers, scholars and pious people remained. During the invasions of conquerors, wars between churches and the feverish passions of the changing times, they led a life apart. They had their existence in their old books and philosophy, in their ancestral prayers and in their consciousness of spiritual ideals. They carried this consciousness through the debris of the era. They learned to endure torture and martyrdom, and in the pain of death screamed out their faith in the one God at the bestial mobs who laughed as they put their victims to death. Once more there arose in them the heroism of antiquity with its proud, legendary sacrifice of men, women and children. The old sagas with their descriptions of slaughter and endurance seemed to be repeated in this new age which began with the Renaissance and ended with Montesquieu and the period of the Enlightenment, an age in which the great witches' sabbath of the Counter-Reformation was celebrated.

The heyday of Spanish Jewry was during the height of the Middle Ages, at the time when the Arabs ruled Spain. The Arabic language, closely related to the Hebrew, and the renascence of Islamic-Arabian philosophy, allowed Jewish thought and poetry to flourish as they had not been able to do since the days of the Bible and the Talmud. Just as the Jews had once brought the Bible into the Hellenistic world, the Jews and Arabs now introduced Greek thought into the European world of the Scholastics. They did not allow the intellectual agitation of the closing Middle Ages to pass them by. It was their hour for attentive listening and new creative production.

In the Mohammedan as in the Christian world, the Spanish-Jewish philosophers constituted a quiet island. And yet, this island produced works whose authors, some unknown and some misunderstood, influenced the trend of thought in those times more than any of their contemporaries. A French scholar admiringly wrote, "The Jewish sages, entirely devoted to their religious and philosophical studies, tried to forget a sad present in a world of ideas. They paid very little attention to their material existence, and despised worldly things to such an extent that history, which left so unfortunte a gap in the Jewish literature of the Middle Ages, practically forgot about them altogether."

Their profound piety, united with the mystical current of the age, was transferred to their knowledge of Arabic and Latin. By such devious paths they arrived at the philosophy of Aristotle, which only now became fully known, and which was carried by Jewish philosophers from the

Arabic, into the Latin and then into the Christian thought of the time. Profoundly stirred by Greek philosophy, Solomon ben Gebirol wrote his "Source of Life." The Scholastics, however, admiringly thought of him as an Arabian philosopher. In the work and personality of Jehuda Halevi, the intellectual longing of the era was revealed, a longing which sought the way to truth somewhere among Aristotle, Neo-Platonism, Christianity, Islamism and Judaism. His poetry combined the restlessness of the times with Jewish piety and Spanish realism. All things were both eternal and temporal to him. Such was the spirit of Jehuda Halevi and of all those speculative, strenuous, yearning people who lived between the East and the West, the East representing their past and future, and the West representing their present.

I dwell within the distant West, yet in the East my heart would be.
How can I savor food and drink that once delighted me?
Alas! How shall I keep my vow, how consecrate myself,
With Zion under Roman yoke and I in bond to Araby?
My eyes see worthless chaff in all the fruit of Spanish soil;
But where our holy Temple stood, golden is the dust I see.

Gradually, the East disappeared from their consciousness in proportion as their self-esteem and power grew, and as the intellectual world which they had created in Spain became more stable. They had become established now as heirs to an old, and testators of a new, tradition. Born in an atmosphere of ancient prayer, they spent their entire lives immersed in the study of the Bible, the Talmud and in the Greek and their own philosophers; and they died with the holy invocation of God on their lips. They

had acquired houses, riches and culture, and many friends among the Spaniards. They were the physicians of that land, for only their healing hands seemed blessed. And so, once again, there was meted out to them a fruitful existence and participation in a great epoch. But then a tremor shook the "distant West," an earthquake which set the Spanish world in flames, which reduced culture, well-being and human dignity to ashes. A new epoch in history began, the most criminal that Europe had ever known: the age of the Inquisition.

The religious fervor that the Crusades had enkindled was by no means extinguished; it had continued an underground existence that was ever ready to burst to the surface again. The Reformation and all the other heretical movements of the era had at last led the Church, in its defensive battle, to adopt a position of attack. The terrible weapon it chose was the Inquisition, which could not only be used at any time for the benefit of the Church, but also to whip up the religious fanaticism of the masses and to further the interests of the State. As early as 1232, Gregory XI assigned the Inquisition to the Dominicans; they became the real "domini canes," the bloodhounds of God. As long as the raging, religious fervor and the terrible weapon of the Inquisition held sway, the Church had to find victims for it. A mass frenzy surged through the world and lusted for death, a lust that could only be sated with the blood of its victims, and could only be appeased when the hands that had heaped thousands onto the execution pyres became tired of their own gruesome performance. There is a mystery in killing as there is a mystery in

dying. The religious fervor that drove State and Church into the dreadful slaughter of the Inquisition was also shared by the victims, who died for God even if they had not always lived for Him. Both had the name of God on their lips; both chanted prayers, the murderers as well as the murdered.

The horrors of the era of the Inquisition continued for centuries. No sin is greater and more formidable than one that has no apparent reason. Once, when St. Augustine was confessing a minor sin, he added sadly, "I was evil for nothing, and the reason for my malignity was only malignity itself. It was ugly, and I was happy about it. I was glad of my perversity, of my error, not of that for which I had committed it. I liked the fault for itself." History is also fond of its "faults." How can we ask it to give an accounting of them? A Russian writer, named Bjelinsky, once declared that he would demand an accounting from even the highest stage of evolution for all the sacrifices of history; and he named the Spanish Inquisition as the most horrible sacrifice that chance and superstition had ever exacted. And its victims were the Marranos.

They had been compelled to become Christians by the Church and the State. Certainly there were some among them who unhesitatingly, and without any feeling of being bound to their old faith, stepped into the new community without compunction. There were even those who went so far in denying their origin as to join the persecutors of their old religion and their own race. Most of them, however, yielded only outwardly to force, remaining Jews at heart. Because of their loyalty to their

faith, they had to die. And by their death they transformed the peaceful mission of Christianity into one of barbarism, just as they themselves were transformed from quiet, peaceful adherents to their faith into tragic martyrs. Montesquieu has one of his Jewish victims of the Inquisition say, "You ask us to become Christians; but you yourselves refuse to follow Christian tenets. However, if you do not desire to act as Christians, you might at least act as human beings. You treat us as though the guidance of religion and the light of Holy Revelation were entirely lacking in you. Do you still possess that simple sense of justice which nature itself has accorded to all of us?"

The Church knew that many "New Christians" adhered secretly to the old rites and belonged to the Catholic faith only in appearance, while studying the spirit, laws and customs of the old religion under the tutelage of those of their race who had remained in Judaism. In those times of religious upheaval, the sprouting seed of Judaism within the community of the Church seemed a dangerous growth of apostasy and heresy. The Church deemed it necessary to uproot it by means of religious tribunals. In the name of faith, the court and the people gathered at the place of execution. Thousands were thrust onto the execution pyre, litanies were sung, crosses and pennants were carried high above the crowd, and the cry, *"Viva la fé!"* resounded through the streets and squares. Under the sign of the cross, dressed in penitential robes, barefoot, with painted paper caps on their heads and church candles in their hands, the condemned paraded to the place of execution, passing by under the jeering eyes of the

Spanish court. The victims also silently repeated, *"Viva la fé!"* but it was in honor of a different faith. They also screamed out the name of God, exactly as did their murderers, in order that their sacrifice should not remain meaningless. We know that this death for the faith, suffered by many thousands of Marranos, made the hard faces of the Inquisitors even harder, made the lust and bestiality of the mob even greater. But many were also profoundly revolted and overcome with shame. During the great *auto-da-fé* of 1680 in Madrid, great astonishment filled the rows of court spectators at a heroism such as had never been seen before. Were these victims, who understood so well how to die for God, really unbelievers and heretics?

III

The Inquisition raged on for more than three hundred years, making Spain the inferno of Europe. It had been introduced by Ferdinand of Aragon, the Catholic, and Isabella of Castille, the Bigot, in order to please the Church and the Dominicans. It was meant to serve as a witness of their own strength of faith and, incidentally, as a benefit to the royal treasury. It was said that Isabella, under the influence of her confessor, had made a vow to turn Spain over to the Inquisition. The Grand Inquisitor, Thomas de Torquemada, Prior of the Dominican Order in Avila, the most frightful embodiment of all the horrible and bloody instincts of mankind, had obtained from the Infanta Isabella a promise to help annihilate the Spanish

heretics for the honor of God and Church. When she became Queen, he demanded that she fulfill the promise she had made as Infanta. The avarice of the King was well known. His religious fanaticism was far less than his greed for the confiscated wealth of the Marranos, that would be assigned to the crown and to the clergy. Thus the Inquisition served to increase the glory of the Empire, the power of the Church and the wealth of both throne and altar. But destruction is always greater than gain, the vengeance of the victim more terrible than the deed. The Inquisition succeeded in exterminating the Marranos and Judaism in Spain; but it left a burnt-out land in its wake, a land from which freedom as well as culture was banished for a long time to come.

The Inquisition chose its victims from every class of the Marranos: noblemen, physicians, jurists, clergymen and commoners,—all those suspected of secretly being Jews. It also selected those few who had the courage, in the name of Christianity, to raise a protest against the rage of this fanaticism. Yes, even monks, priests, respected teachers of the Christian religion were burned at the stake; for Torquemada and his myrmidons believed that such protests convicted them of their adherence to Judaism. No one could protect himself from Torquemada's henchmen, from their calumnies, espionage and accusations, from the horrors of torture and the fury of hate and destruction which had taken hold of the populace. Yet, at times, astonishment, uneasiness and sober realization arose in the land, especially when someone was sacrificed whose purity of character and loftiness of soul were well

known to the people. The nuptials of Charles II and Marie Louise of Orleans were celebrated by an *auto-da-fé* in which fifty Marranos were sacrificed to mark the festivities. A seventeen-year-old girl, who had been condemned to die, called out to the young Queen, "Have mercy, Oh Queen! How can I renounce the faith that I was nurtured on at my mother's breast?" The Queen and her French guests were shocked, but they could not speak out; nor could they do anything to prevent the catastrophe. In 1624, Antonio Homen, a professor, deacon and teacher of canonical law, one of the most respected priests in Lisbon, fell into the clutches of the Inquisition and was executed because he, a high Catholic priest, had held clandestine services in a small synagogue, and had taught and preached in a Jewish congregation that had later spread over all of Portugal. He was called "the hapless teacher." People knew he could not have died because of any evil he had committed; and suspicion began to arise as to the motives of the Inquisition.

Thus, thousands breathed their last in the flames, condemned by the Church and sentenced by its "secular arm." Never is a war more terrible than when it is fought for an idea which the combatants either do not understand or which they misuse. In both camps of the Inquisition, that of the executioner and that of the victim, the name of God was pronounced, each camp desiring to pay homage to Him in its own fashion, in its various ways of teaching and praying, as well as in the barbarous rites of killing and dying. It almost seemed as if God had divided Himself and was struggling against Himself, that he was at the

same time both Christian and Jew, bishop and rabbi, His own murderer as well as His own victim.

From every city, from Madrid, Toledo, Saragossa, Avila, drifts of smoke from the *autos-da-fé* rose up into the Spanish sky. Feverish with their lust for slaughter, the eyes of the Inquisitors stared at the burning clothing, limbs and bodies of their victims, their nostrils inhaling the odor of scorching human flesh. Even the Word of God was burned in the name of religion; thousands of Hebrew bibles were consumed in the flames. From palaces and churches the ravagers observed the destruction. For not only were the Marranos on the execution pyre; Spain was also burning, the glory of her name, the brilliance of her history, the heritage of her culture.

The Inquisition had driven the Marranos from all parts of the Spanish Empire. A third of them had been murdered, the rest were in flight, looking for new homes; or, terrified, they remained in hiding, waiting for the hour when their fate would overtake them. The greatest number of victims was linked with the name of Torquemada, who was at the head of the Inquisition from 1485 to 1498, more than thirteen years, during which time more than two thousand Marranos were burned. But to the Grand Inquisitor also came the fate which awaits all those who have no friends, and whose bloody hands no one dares to clasp. The same fear that he had instilled in others soon came to him also, fear for his life and fear of a bloody retribution. He had a bodyguard of both mounted and foot soldiers assigned to him; he was afraid of every Marrano that he could not lead either to the stake or to

the dungeon; he feared the curses of the slaughtered and the menace of their families and friends. He was afraid that poison might be put into his food; and in superstitious fear, he had a unicorn placed on his table; for it was said that the unicorn was capable of counteracting the ill effects of all poisons. Torquemada's successor, the Grand Inquisitor Deza, considered by many as even more terrible than his predecessor, was himself suspected of secretly being a Jew, and was indicted. Thus the lust for murder raged against itself, and ruin came over the entire land.

The Jews were the teachers of the Marranos. They had led the New Christians back to the old faith; they were brothers, confidants and aids to them in their days of need. It was only logical that the Inquisition should not stop with the extermination of the Marranos; and soon it directed its attention to the Jews themselves; because it was they, after all, who had sown the poisonous seed which the Inquisition wished to destroy by fire and by sword. At first the Inquisition sought to prevent the influence of the Jews from extending further into the camp of the Marranos. They were separated, and the Jews were herded together into small quarters in the towns. They were banned from the everyday life of Spain. Only physicians were allowed to frequent all parts of the city, because they and their skill were needed.

But this expedient did not achieve the desired result of creating a split between the Jews and the Marranos. The most terrible and most radical end to all this violence was the expulsion of all the Jews from Spain, a country for whose glory they had labored through the centuries.

On the 31st of March, 1492, an edict was proclaimed that within four months, all the Jews of Castille, Aragon, Sardinia and Sicily had to cross the borders and leave these provinces. A sense of numbness assailed Christians as well as Jews. A feeling arose that the rulers of the Spanish lands desired to arrest all progress and, by turning back the clock of natural, historical development, might succeed in destroying the entire structure of past centuries. Leading personalities, physicians and counsellors of the royal family, hurried to the King to dissuade him from a decision that would influence not only the destiny of hundreds of thousands of Jews, but also that of the whole of Spain and of the throne itself. They finally reached the stage of negotiations; money was offered, enormous sums of money to revoke the edict. But at that very same moment their condemnation was sealed; the Grand Inquisitor entered the palace, bringing his insatiable hate with him, and the dreadful power of his words, before which even kings were obliged to humble themselves. Though he held the crucifix in his hand, he was nevertheless a prince of Hell; and his biblical words meant nothing less than a curse upon innocent life, upon all growing things and upon all men. "For thirty pieces of silver Judas Iscariot sold Christ. For three hundred thousand ducats Your Majesty is ready to sell Him again. Here, take Him and sell Him again!" The massive crucifix fell resoundingly on the table before the King and Queen, and they shuddered. The die had been cast.

Once again the priests tried to persuade the frightened Jews; once again the Dominicans promised them their

homes if they would be baptized. But the Jewish teachers and rabbis exhorted their congregations to remain true to their old faith and not to put themselves into the hands of those who had murdered their brother Marranos.

So they departed, leaving behind them the houses of worship and the schools and hospitals which they had built, and the graves of their fathers and mothers. With empty hands they began their journey into an unknown world where, for the second time, they were to be dispersed. Some dragged with them, as their only possession, the gravestones of their dear ones. In farewell, they sang hymns and psalms in praise of God.

They wandered off in every direction, to Italy, Africa and Turkey; but most of them went to Portugal. However, here also they were permitted to remain only a few years. King Manuel of Portugal brought to his court the Spanish king's daughter, and with her came the Inquisition. At first the Marranos and Jews were driven out, but later they were forbidden to leave, so that they might be forced into baptism and have their children alienated from them. Leone Ebreo, the physician and sage who had resisted all enticements and had renounced all his possessions, had emigrated to Italy, thinking his child safe in Portugal. He exhorted his son from afar: "My first born, turn back your heart; know that you are the son of sages in the highest degree, of men like unto prophets. Your heritage is wisdom. Do not forget the days of your childhood any longer, my dear one."

But after the year 1492, Spain was no longer the same; it became a sad, poor and sullen land. It was still in pos-

session of its old, though jaded culture; but its creative power, from this time on, seemed to have been destroyed. Only the Spanish Republic understood this greatest misfortune of Spanish history. One of its ministers openly declared, "Spain, my beloved country, did not make use of the advantage of being the cradle of a remarkable Jewish culture; this would have distinguished it from all other lands. Not those nations are great that lock out all elements of another origin; rather are those nations great which are capable of absorbing other elements and of forming a unit with them. Place your hope in a liberal Spain of the future, in which Arabian, Jewish and Spanish culture will be fused together in perfect union! There will ensue one culture under whose surface various streams will flow, each one preserving its individuality. This culture will be characterized by the great love of knowledge which has always been a distinguishing trait of you Jews."

They journeyed on, knowing full well that whatever new home they might find, their old destiny would always have to remain with them. This destiny bore the names of Spain, Maimonides and Jehuda Halevi; it was associated with leadership in the arts and sciences, with medical achievement, with religious zeal and loyalty. The Baroque era witnessed a loosening of forms and a birth of new enthusiasms. Its inspiration was evident both in the realm of pure reason and in a mystical exuberance of feeling. Thus, rationalism and mysticism became the heralds of the future to these exiles. But the experiences of the past clung to their heels and forced them to look for protection from new dangers. However, the ways and means they sought

were quite similar to those which had once provided death at the stake and exile for them.

They feared heresy within their own ranks, because their religious doctrine was the only possession that they had been able to save. The persecuted became inflexible adherents to dogma, and themselves persecuted all heretics. They settled in Holland, filled with a thirst for the knowledge of a new era, and imbued with a mysticism and messianic zeal that came from the Orient and was a characteristic of the times. Reinforced in their tradition and in their doctrines, they introduced a new inquisition which, although milder than the Catholic one, still brought malediction and suffering into the ranks of their own community.

Such was the atmosphere in which the destiny of Baruch Spinoza was unfolded.

How many are there who despair
of their salvation?
—URIEL DA COSTA

CHAPTER TWO

Life in Bondage

I

IN THE Europe of the seventeenth century the Jews of Amsterdam formed a foreign island by themselves. In their community as in their destiny there was reproduced the history of the changing times which, amidst religious strife and social unrest, strove to create a new state, a new culture and a new religion. We witness the extraordinary spectacle of a people who, although they had lost their country, still preserved their nationality and based their conception of a community on their religion. The Dutch Government accepted the presence of the Marranos and the Jews within its borders, but without immediately making Dutch citizens of them. Guilds and corporations were closed to the "Hebrew Nation." They were allowed to become physicians but not lawyers or public officials. However, they were permitted to work, to think and to worship unmolested. They were thankful for the permission to live in this free northern land and for the privilege of owning a new home. They had the intention of becoming good and grateful Dutchmen—not until 1657 were they

recognized as citizens of the Republic—but they could not forget Spain and Portugal entirely.

Spain and Portugal did not forget them either; nor did the Inquisition forget its Marrano heretics. The enforced emigration had formed a new tie between the homeland and the exiled, even if it consisted, on the Spanish side, of an attempt to continue the system of martyrdom and persecution into a foreign land. The Spanish embassy in the Netherlands employed a secret police agency which kept the homeland informed of the names of all the Marranos in Amsterdam who had returned to Judaism. Letters that the emigrants sent to their Spanish friends were secretly opened; and any attempts to return to the homeland were prevented. Whoever risked this, on the pretext of being a Christian, was immediately apprehended by the bloody arms of the Inquisition. The enemy had been driven out of the land, and the Church had triumphed; but there was no peace. The Marranos were still troubled and distressed.

Thus the new community formed an island in Dutch life, both because of its religion and because of its origin. The old Jewish habit of isolation, although practically abandoned in Spain, now again awoke in these foreign surroundings. The language of the emigrants remained Spanish and Portuguese, as did their spirit. They printed their own newspaper and called it 'Gazeta de Amsterdam." They continued to read Spanish books, translated them into Dutch, wrote verse and philosophical works in the Spanish and Portuguese languages, and performed Spanish dramas and operas in their theaters. But above all they

desired to be Jews; they wished to document their character in a Jewish way, because their future could only be a Jewish and not a Spanish one. Hence, they studied the Bible, the Talmud and Jewish philosophy. They founded a Hebrew book-printing industry which soon supplied most of the Jewish congregations with religious books; they built a school and named it "The Tree of Life," because in it a new youth was to be brought up. The subject matter of the studies was Jewish, but the language of instruction was Portuguese. Their poets were Jewish in character, but their tongue was Spanish and Portuguese.

There was Antonio Gomez, the "Jewish Calderon," who had been a captain in the Spanish army, and who, because of the Inquisition, had gone to Bordeaux and to Amsterdam, had entered Judaism, and was now writing his dramas, in which the memory of the old homeland was alive. The old homeland, however, did not forget these dramas either, for the works of this Marrano, damned by the Inquisition, were all read in Spain and became a part of Spanish literature. Then there was Daniel Levi de Barrios, who experienced the conflict of the Marranos in an especially painful fashion, vacillating between Judaism and Christianity, between Spain, the West Indies and Holland, between soldiery and verse writing. He was filled to the brim with passion and with visions of religious ecstasy. There was Josef Penso, the first among them to write in the Hebrew language, the author of a drama called "Prisoners of Hope." And lastly, there was Orobio de Castro, a philosopher, teacher and physician in Spain, who had been thrown into prison and tortured on the rack

by the Inquisition. He was a doctor of medicine and a favorite of Louis XIV in France. In Amsterdam he became a zealous philosopher of Judaism, an author of theological essays in Spanish, and a belligerent opponent of Spinoza. Thus these men carried the Spanish and Portuguese languages—and what stronger bond does a community have than its language?—into a future which they were determined to make Jewish, for no other future was conceivable to them.

Because of an adverse destiny, the Marranos had been forced to begin a new life. The problem was to change a sorrowful past into an advantageous future. Christianity was done with; but they had been students of the Gospel and members of the Church—many of them devout Catholics under the guidance of priests—too long a time for them to be able to forget their Christian past so easily. They took up the Jewish teachings much as school children slowly beginning to learn the alphabet. They desired to include everything in their Judaism, what they had lost and what they had gained: their Spanish home, their Christian past, the liberty of the Netherlands, the faith of their ancestors, and the holy sacrifices of their martyrs. Was it surprising then, that they actually transplanted to a new soil that same Spanish fanaticism of which they themselves had been the victims? Always it is the vanquished, the hated, the sufferers, who jealously and intolerantly guard the integrity of those doctrines for which they have suffered so much.

And so the curse of the Inquisition continued its work in Holland also. The Marranos had followed God and

had lost their home. They would be true to God from generation to generation, obeying a divine summons. For them, a world without God was now unthinkable. Thus the Synagogue turned against the new spirit of the Enlightenment from its very inception, against every word of liberalism and of freedom. All doors and fissures of their sacred edifice were sealed so that not a breath of air of any foreign mode of thought could force its way into their beloved sanctum, which now represented home to them. The Church had transmitted its malediction to the Synagogue—that, too, was a dreadful vengeance on those who had escaped the Inquisition. Among these Jews were the best and noblest spirits of that unfortunate people: Uriel da Costa and Juan de Prado; and in Italy, Moses Chaim Luzzato. Finally, there was the greatest one of them all, Baruch Spinoza, whose Spanish-Jewish name was destined to be known in all lands and in all eras.

II

In the year 1585, Gabriel da Costa was born into a noble Catholic family living in the Portuguese seaside town of Porto. It was said that the da Costa ancestors had been Jews upon whom Christianity had been imposed. But that had been a long time ago; they did not like to be reminded of it. Besides, it was an indisputable fact that they were no longer Jews. For in the rich, aristocratic palace of the da Costas, there reigned an austere and genuine Catholic spirit in an atmosphere that breathed the knightly virtues of Spanish feudalism. As a certain Fran-

cesco Bernadone, who later became Saint Francis, once grew up in the brilliance and wealth of his paternal home, so did this Gabriel grow up in an atmosphere of wealth and luxury. He was destined to become Uriel da Costa. As a young Portuguese nobleman, he was skilled in all the arts of his age, from horsemanship to Jesuit dialectics. The Jesuits were actually the vanguard of the Counter-Reformation; they were the theologians and pedagogues of their age, the acknowledged advisors in doubtful matters of religion and philosophical dispute. They were secular priests who knew and understood the habits of the upper classes of society. Hence, young Gabriel was bound to have a fine and easy existence; but it was his destiny to become Uriel, which means "God's light."

Early in life he showed traits of character that rebelled against this secure, formal world, this proud realm of fashion. His schooled sense of honor bound him to the aristocracy, but he had great sympathy for the tragic needs of the poor, and was horrified by every injustice and every violence inflicted upon them. "My character and natural inclinations were innately very sensitive and had such a tendency toward compassion that I could not control my tears when I heard of the misfortunes of others." His personal misfortune, however, was the troubled sadness of his own soul, his metaphysical restlessness, his religious yearning that seemingly could never be appeased. Religion was something more to him than merely lip service and the power of the Church. It was even more to him than the Christian way of life. It meant the search for ultimate truth and purity of existence. A priestly piety grew up in

the troubled boy, transporting him far from the pleasure and dalliance of his social environment, and into increasingly profound inquiries concerning God and religion. He struggled with Christian doctrines as ardently and as feverishly as Jacob wrestled with the Angel. And this time, too, the Angel called the struggler "Israel," making him a Jew.

With the pale, care-lined face of the spiritual seeker, the aristocratic boy spent his youth in his Portuguese home. He studied canonical law at the Jesuit University of Coimbra, was initiated into the lower orders of the Society, and then became bursar of a Catholic collegiate church. He was now twenty-five years old, distinguished and highly accomplished; and yet, this half-secular and half-priestly young man was at home in neither state, remaining solitary and isolated with the torment of his religious conflicts.

Gabriel did not actually know of his Jewish origin; nor did he have the slightest inkling of the fate of the Marranos. He was troubled with the important questions of Catholic metaphysics only. What was the right way to eternal salvation of the soul? Was there a Hereafter? What was the relation between faith and reason? These were the questions that agitated him. Confession brought him no relief; books and theologians provided no answer to his impulsive questioning. What struck his ear was merely words, words of men, words from books. And the words were pale and barren in comparison with the truthful, living Word of God. Were the doctrines of the Church at all true? Had they actually been proclaimed by God?

The true Revelation really existed only in the books of the Old Testament, and hence, only in the doctrines of Judaism.

Was it the blood of his ancestors that made itself felt in such convictions as these? Real Christianity lies only in the words that God Himself has spoken; everything else is artificial and untrue, being mere theology. Real Christianity is only Judaism as revealed by Moses and the Prophets. As yet, the youth did not know that in Judaism there also existed an ecclesiastical decadence, and that heirs and expounders had formed a religion of theologians. His desire was to seek God in the original words of prophecy and revelation, and to follow the original doctrines. Consequently, he decided to emulate Saint Francis and to discard riches, position and a brilliant, worldly future in order to live only for the true religion. He not only received from his family approval of this unheard of decision, but was also successful in persuading his mother and brothers to return with him to the true religion of Judaism and to undergo the perils of fleeing from Portugal.

In about the year 1612, Gabriel landed in Amsterdam and, with his family, joined the faith of Judaism. His name was now Uriel da Costa, and he belonged to a community that was to fulfill his hope of a congregation that lived for truth and God's holiness. But things turned out to be different from what he had imagined they would be in this foreign city and in this unaccustomed world. The Judaism of the rabbis was different from the simple and holy religion of the ancient Bible. Between the rabbis and

this youth there again arose the obstacle of books an doctrines that did not come directly from God; there wer the Talmud and the Cabala, and a rigid and gloom dogmatism, all quite close to the spirit of the church tha Uriel had recently left behind him. And so his situatio remained the same as it had been. His fervent questior were still unanswered, even in these new surroundings.

These questions had their origin in his Catholic hear for in the Jewish religion they are of far less importanc than in the Roman Catholic Church. Once again, in h profound distress, Uriel cried out to God, but the respons came to him only in the cut and dried and indifferent worc of the rabbis' commentaries. They were lofty and shrew spirits, these rabbis, Morteira, Pardo and Uziel, who ha come from the old Sephardic congregations to the Dutc city to help Spaniards and Portuguese on their way fro Christianity to Judaism. Uriel also wished to be the pupil and to fulfill all the traditional laws in holy sel abnegation. But was this tradition really the true one Had it not been arbitrarily changed, distorted by huma hands and alienated from God's original meaning? H better judgment compelled him to criticize this traditio In 1616 he published in Hamburg his "Propostas contr a Tradiçaõ," ten theses against the tradition of the law to which he requested an answer from the old Venetia congregation. The answer, however, indicated that the knew nothing of the misery created by religious doub It was merely a corrective and informative set of instru tions for those who did not know, written by those wh did. The answer implied excommunication from the re

gion he had acquired with such difficulty and so much love. Uriel's stand resulted in the proclamation of a ban against him in Venice on August 14, 1618. He was also denounced in Hamburg; and, although he was not openly condemned in Amsterdam, the ban hovered like a sinister menace over his head.

Forced onto the road of rebellion, Uriel now found that he could not turn back. Catholicism and Judaism, Church and Synagogue had not given him the answers to the questions on which his life depended. His theses were the first attempt to force the truth from those who thought they had a monopoly on it. With his erstwhile Catholic conscience, he felt he must go on asking, must know, beyond the possibility of a doubt, about eternity, salvation and immortality. Uriel's dangerous thoughts and intentions, the spiritual storm that raged within him, and the peril of his destructive questionings were recognized. His rabbinical opponents decided to anticipate him the next time, and sent him an answer to his new, rebellious tract, an answer which came from the wise Doctor Samuel da Silva and which defended the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. Uriel, however, disavowed the truth of this doctrine, which he had not been able to find corroborated in the Bible, thereby also denying an important Christian dogma, and thus making Christians and Jews join hands against him in an enmity bent upon his destruction.

In 1624, Uriel da Costa's refutation was published. This time he stood condemned by his own word, and he found himself in a desperate predicament. He was alone

with his eternally unknown God and the hatred that would now burst upon him from all sides. This hatred met him on the street, where children shouted curses and invectives after him, where maledictions could be heard and clenched fists were seen at every window. The congregation repudiated him and pronounced its ban upon the heretic. His own brothers, whom he had persuaded to take the trip to Holland and to turn to Judaism, avoided him as they would the plague. The Christian administrative authority of the city of Amsterdam finally arrested him and imposed a heavy fine upon him. Thus he lived in disgrace and bitterness, surrounded by accusers and spies, since almost everyone was seeking a pretext for doing away with the heretic altogether. He had abandoned his wealth and his home and the safe fold of an omnipotent Church, hoping to find truth and peace in a small community of homeless exiles. And now he was being treated like a mangy cur, and cast out as though he were a cause of contagion. But Uriel had not yet reached the end of his striving; he had not yet realized that he would never find divine truth in his association with men. He did not have the strength or the courage for a life of solitude; nor did he have the creative force to hew a path for himself, a path to the truth, different from that taken by the schools and the churches. He had been Gabriel, "the champion of God," but now he was Uriel, "the light of God," that the people wanted to snuff out. He would never see freedom, nor ever escape from the constraint of his desires. He was not a "Baruch," nor could he be a "Benedict," for Benedict means "blessed," and that assuredly he would never be.

The war against Uriel da Costa extended even to thoughts which he had not as yet definitely formulated nor expressed in any way. This animosity only strengthened his critical disposition and increased his skepticism, so that he was continually driven into even greater rebellion, into further contradiction and finally, into challenging the Synagogue itself. Doubt pressed ever deeper into his heart and at last was concentrated into the decisive question as to whether or not it was admissible that the Mosaic Law was really a revelation direct from God Himself. The conviction grew on him that this oldest and primary religious law, after all, originated from men, just as was the case with the laws of all other religions. Such a contention, however, closed the doors of all churches to this man, even though he had spent his whole life seeking God. And it separated him, at the same time, from all mankind, from his family, from his friends, and from every community. Uriel became an old man, living in loneliness and brooding in stark isolation, struggling and suffering until his death.

He no longer had the strength to live under these conditions. His struggle to solve the riddle of God, and his vain appeal to the hardened hearts of men, had aged him prematurely. He was tired, deathly tired! All he desired now was a roof over his head and people in his house, people who would be good to him, who would take his hand and speak to him with love in their hearts. Was it cynicism if he now renounced all right to express his sincere convictions? Was this not the only road left open to him leading back to a normal existence? The convictions

he had reached by his struggles through those troubled years did not make him give up God; on the contrary, he felt even closer to Him. But just as Gabriel had once separated himself from Catholicism, so did Uriel now separate himself from Judaism.

We might interpret his religious conviction as a precursor of the rationalistic conception of religion in the sense of the philosophy of the Enlightenment. Uriel's faith was a kind of deism which did not recognize any revealed religion but only admitted belief in natural religion. This was similar to the doctrines of the English deists, Herbert of Cherbury, Blound, John Toland and Matthew Tindal; and, at least in its negative aspects, was also related to that new understanding of God attained by Spinoza and Prado. This Juan (Daniel) de Prado was excommunicated by the congregation of Amsterdam at the same time as Spinoza, because he, too, had expressed heretical views and was accused of trying to impose his ideas on young people. And a hundred years later, the congregation of Venice placed a ban on the mystic Luzzato, that visionary warrior against all rationalistic interpretation of Holy Scripture. The religious tensions of that century were as acute as its orthodoxy was powerful.

Da Costa was not a philosopher like Spinoza. He was not inclined to seek for the truth in the realm of pure thought. What he attempted was the difficult task of returning to a community whose faith he did not share. He was ready to swallow his pride, even to betray his conscience rather than forego the brotherhood that he needed so desperately. He wished to return to the community

from which he had been separated for fifteen tortured years. There, as he expressed it, he would from now on "ape the apes."

But distrust and hate, and the avarice of his kinsmen had become too great for Uriel to be left in peace. The last act of his tragedy began when he counselled some Christian friends not to be converted to Judaism. When Uriel's counsel became common gossip in the streets of Amsterdam, the rabbis and elders of the congregation finally convened. Curses were showered upon him from every side, and there was a great desire to destroy this persistent heretic once and for all. A choice was proposed to Uriel: either excommunication and all the horrors of a damned life, or public disavowal of his views and doctrines. In terrible fear, the aging man cried out his refusal to recant. From the Grand Council of the Synagogue he learned all the brutal details of humiliation and degradation to which he would have to submit if he wished to return to the holy community of Israel. But this was too great a demand; it could only arouse rage and complete estrangement within him.

For seven years Uriel persisted in his refusal to recant. For seven years he endured public contempt, abuse, insult, stoning and the mocking laughter of children. He was ill and alone, with a sick body and a languishing soul.

Uriel would have desired an impartial judge who might make an effort to get at the truth and be man enough to assert the truth as he saw it. But such a judge was not accorded to him, neither by man nor by the law. And so finally nothing was left for him but to accept this

shameful end to all his striving and all his religious yearning. Thus Uriel discovered how difficult God makes it for those who, from the depths of their hearts, love and seek Him. The unfortunate man now understood the martyrs of history; he understood the Passion of Jesus Christ. And Uriel also wanted to take up his cross, not, however, for an eternal salvation but for his present salvation. Perhaps a blessed ending to his life might still be accorded to him.

It was a day in April of the year 1640. In the Synagogue countless people were crowded together to hear Uriel da Costa's confession and to witness this aged man's naked body being bound to a pillar to receive thirty-nine lashes with a leather scourge, while the congregation sang psalms and murmured pious prayers. It has ever been thus. Humbly they repeat their prayers, prepare their meals according to the prescribed ritual and observe their pious customs and practices, believing that they thereby possess God, that they have Him carefully guarded in their houses, like a sack of gold in a cupboard. But Gabriel, who in the deepest and sincerest conviction, had revolted from the Church in whose service he had been, and who had abandoned his home in order to become a Jew, was now lying in the dust in front of the gate of the Synagogue, while boys and old men strode over his prostrate body. Then they sent him home, enslaved and humbled forever. He knew that the street urchins were right when they cried after him that he was neither Jew nor Christian. He himself thought that one could only be either a Jew or a Christian. But now he wanted only to pretend he was a

Jew, although, on the other hand, he did not want to be a Christian either. At fifty-five years of age, Uriel came to this feeble decision. But it was too late, much too late!

At the time that Uriel da Costa shot himself, Baruch Spinoza was seven years old.

III

The cemetery of the Portuguese congregation is situated in Ouderkerk, on the Amstel River. Some of the gravestones in this cemetery are still standing, bearing dates as early as 1614. They are silent witnesses to the history of this community and the destiny of the Marranos, calling to mind their Spanish, Portuguese and Dutch origins.

The Despinoza family can be traced far back through the centuries, in Spain, Portugal and France. Many of its members are interred in this plot of Dutch soil, as though it were the old Iberian homeland. In Spain, the name of Despinoza had been linked with varying destinies and professions; it was closely associated with all the vicissitudes in the history of the Marranos. The name was borne by scholars, soldiers and priests. There had even been a Cardinal, Don Diego D'Espinoza, who had been Grand Inquisitor. There were numerous families of that name. We know that Baruch's ancestors were Spanish, that they had fled to Portugal and to France before the Inquisition, and that they were later reunited in Holland. His father's name was Michael Despinoza, although he had been called Miguel in their old home. He was probably born in the

southern part of Portugal, some believe in Spanish Galicia. His mother's name was Hanna Deborah. She died as early as 1638, when Baruch was six years old. She had been Michael's second wife. After her death, Michael married for a third time. His new wife was Esther Despinoza of Lisbon, Baruch's stepmother.

Michael Despinoza spent his childhood in the Jewish quarter of Amsterdam which, however, was not a ghetto in so far as compulsion or restraint were concerned, but rather a Spanish-Portuguese island in the prosperous Dutch commercial town. A strange atmosphere reigned in these alleys where words and customs existed that were unfamiliar to the Dutchmen. Stepping out of the city of Amsterdam proper into the Jewish quarter was like crossing the border into another land: a different language was spoken; there were southern faces with traits of a characteristic aristocracy created by centuries of suffering. A visitor to the quarter would be engulfed in the tide of a teeming life, tumultuous and yet restrained, colorful and yet monotonous. This quarter of the town was called "Vlooienburg" (the "town of fleas"), for here, according to folk legend, the people of Amsterdam formerly threw their cast-off rags, together with the fleas that were in them. It was an island between narrow canals, joined to the mainland by wooden bridges. Here Baruch Despinoza was born on November 24, 1632.

His earliest childhood was dull and quiet. It was a motherless childhood, spent with a father who was a well-to-do business man held in high esteem by all who knew him. His father was devoted to Judaism, and was pious

according to the laws of the Synagogue and of charity. He enjoyed all the marks of distinction and recognition that the Portuguese congregation could accord him, and belonged to their representative body, the Board of Directors. In 1651 he became the administrator of their loan association formed to aid the poor. He was a man of admirable qualities, such as was often found in Portuguese families. The early death of Baruch's mother cast a shadow over the boy's childhood and over their house, in which there were to be so many deaths. His father buried his first two wives, but the third outlived him. And he also buried four children in the cemetery in Ouderkerk.

The lives of these Portuguese children and the games they played bore the stamp of their origin. They were different from the children of the German Jews who had settled in Amsterdam and whose religious customs and observances were entirely different from theirs. In the games and songs of these children, born in Holland, the Spanish homeland played a prominent role, as did their pride in recalling that they belonged to an aristocratic nation with an illustrious past. Even the poorest among them tried to preserve a last vestige of the old Spanish grandeur. Spinoza's excellent and polite manners were always lauded; they were a Spanish heritage. The piety which reigned in his home was liberal and humane. It was known that Michael Spinoza abominated hypocritical piety, which often serves as a mask for deceit and heartlessness; and he brought up Baruch with a thorough distrust of any insincere affectation of piety. One day he sent the ten-year-old boy to an old woman who owed him

money. She fortified herself against the unwelcome little creditor by mumbling pious words and, her head buried deep in the Bible, continued praying without looking up. But Baruch waited and then clearly set forth his father's instructions. After a long delay, the old woman finally counted out the money on the table for him. "Here, this is what I owe your father. May you grow up to be as honest a man as he. Your father never departed from the laws of Moses; and Heaven will bless you only insofar as you walk in his footsteps!" This sounded very pious and honestly spoken. But Baruch knew from his father that this old woman was a hypocrite. He did not trust her, and in spite of her remonstrations, counted the money himself. It was a good thing he had not allowed himself to be misled by her words and noble gestures, for two ducats were missing. The old woman was obliged to pay the boy the additional sum.

When Baruch crossed one of the wooden bridges into the harbor area of the city, he entered a flourishing, bustling world which was completely different from the one he was accustomed to. Mercantile houses and private mansions, warehouses and ships provided an entirely different existence, in which the individual was judged according to his success and in which religion was something confined only to holidays, contrary to life in the Jewish quarter, where prayers and benedictions accompanied every activity by day as well as by night. It is hard to imagine a city as active and as alive as the Amsterdam of the seventeenth century. How could pure thought flourish in such surroundings? How could solitude and contem-

plation find a place in the face of this rampant activity? And yet Holland and Amsterdam were the home of the new philosophy. Descartes withdrew from the world into Holland, where he erected the great edifice of his philosophy. He lived there from 1629 until 1649, wandering about from place to place, "like the Jews in the Arabian desert." In Amsterdam it seemed to him that he was the only person not interested in some trade and not occupied with the affairs of everyday life. The effect on him was a salutary one, for he wrote to his friend, Guez de Balzac, "Every day I go walking in the midst of the busy life of a great multitude, and I feel as free and serene as you do walking along your shady avenues. I observe the people around me just as you do the trees in your woods or the cattle in your pastures; even the clamor of their activity disturbs my dreams as little as the babbling of a brook. With the same pleasure with which you regard the peasants tilling the land, I observe that the work of all these people serves to make more beautiful and more comfortable this, the place of my abode. As the sight of ripening fruit in your gardens gives you satisfaction, so do I watch with delight the ships arriving here, bringing in superabundance the products of both Indies and the rarities of Europe. Nowhere in the world are human comforts as easily obtainable as here. There is no other land in which civil freedom is more complete, security more assured, crime more rare and the traditional simplicity of morals more prevalent."

A few years later, Baruch Spinoza also observed this active world through the eyes of a philosopher. He also

learned to love this land and its civil freedom. He found the same solitude in this city of commerce and pulsing vitality, the Amsterdam that had so pleased his French predecessor. But there was a deeper solitude in his life than in that of Descartes. For, besides signifying peace and estrangement from the outer world, Baruch's solitude also included the resolve to liberate himself from tradition, and to make his life one of poverty and of unworldliness.

In his childhood, Baruch had a greater passion for study than for anything else. In Judaism, learning means two things: first, knowledge acquired by the study of Hebrew, the Bible and the Talmud, and second, prayer. These two are inseparable, for in a way they are one and the same thing. To serve God one has to be acquainted with His Revelations and with the teachings associated with His Name. But for young Baruch, who had consecrated himself to the spirit, there nonetheless existed a difference in this twofold kind of learning. It was this difference which distinguished Baruch Spinoza from Uriel da Costa. In Uriel all spiritual striving had a religious meaning; it served as a realization of God. In Baruch, spiritual striving was concerned with something else, with absolute truth. Thus Uriel's youth was devoted to religious yearning and ardent love of God to the point of spiritual flagellation and self-annihilation; whereas Baruch's studies followed the path of philosophy toward pure reason, a path which leads away from all theology into a freedom which would liberate even God. Uriel, however, enslaved to the last by the power of ecclesiastical

doctrine, always remained a theologian, a pupil of the Jesuits, even when he entered the Jewish quarter of Amsterdam. He died because he could not succeed in becoming independent of religious doctrines. Baruch, from the time of his childhood, was a philosopher who felt that solitude was imperative. For Uriel, it meant only suffering.

Baruch was a pupil in the school named "The Tree of Life." He studied with the same zeal as did those around him. He did not wish to be a business man, like his father and his other relatives. But to the father it seemed unthinkable that his son should follow a different calling from his own.

The "Tree of Life" was an excellent school, although limited in subject matter. Its intellectual status was above that of any other school in the city. Teachers and rabbis taught in seven classes from early morning to the hour for evening prayer. The pupils received religious instruction which extended to a study of sources in the philosophy of religion. The quality of instruction and the teachers in this Amsterdam school were renowned throughout the whole of Judaism. A German Rabbi, Sabbatai Horowitz, who visited Amsterdam in 1641, exclaimed enthusiastically, "Would that this manner of teaching could be spread over all the congregations of Israel!" The pupils studied Hebrew, learned to read the Pentateuch and to translate into Spanish; they studied the Talmud and were instructed in the art of theological debate. A well-stocked school library was at their disposal. But Holland, its language, its history, its people and its geography were missing from the curriculum. Some families also engaged Dutch tutors

in order to give their children the benefit of learning the language of their country and provide them with a general knowledge of the world.

If Uriel had had a schooling of this kind, he would never have tried to foist Catholic questions upon a Jewish community, and, perhaps, would not have brought destruction on himself. Although Baruch went far ahead of this early teaching, yet the spirit of this school bore fruit in him through the years. He acquired the theological knowledge of the era. In the advanced classes he encountered men who were more than good teachers, men of renown and true human leaders.

The face of Rabbi Manasseh ben Israel was immortalized by Rembrandt. His portrait is more Dutch than Jewish, more characteristic of the middle class than of the intellectual. And yet, in the thoughtful eyes there is a look expressing faith in religion as well as in the power of knowledge. This rabbi was held in high esteem by Christians as well as by Jews. At the age of only eighteen, he had been chosen by the congregation as their preacher. All who came to Amsterdam seeking knowledge came to him, for he was acquainted with worldly affairs as few others were. It is known that even Jesuits came to the synagogue when Manasseh preached.

Preeminent in wisdom and character, he was one of the greatest teachers of this congregation, of which he himself was a descendant. He was master of the Latin language, was acquainted with Christian theology and was imbued with the spirit of Humanism. He was always ready to discuss the events or questions that agitated people in

those stirring times. But in everything he remained the Sephardic Jew, whose father bore on his hands the signs of the martyrdom inflicted on him by Spanish torture.

Outwardly, Rabbi Manasseh was modest in appearance. The congregation paid him a small honorarium; he was allowed to preach only once a month, on a Sabbath. But Rabbi Morteira, on the other hand, preached three times a month, gave lessons in higher Talmudic doctrine and was paid six hundred guilders a year in addition to one hundred baskets of peat.

In the home of Rabbi Manasseh the pinch of poverty was often felt. He was compelled to seek a secular occupation. He tried book printing, but could hardly make it pay. Then he thought of becoming a merchant and of emigrating to Brazil. But in the end, he remained faithful to his calling and to his home. The congregation regarded him with suspicion and enmity because he tried to combine the spirit of Judaism with that of the Reformation. Besides, he associated with Christian friends. Deeply impressed by Manasseh's piety and wisdom, a German mystic, Abraham von Frankenberg, declared, "The true light will come from the Jews; their time is not far off. From day to day, from various directions, we shall hear miraculous tidings coming to them, and all the islands will exult with them."

Manasseh, like many others, believed in a Messianic Kingdom; and in 1650 he wrote his "Esperança de Israel." Many believed they saw such a kingdom arising in Cromwell's Puritan England, which seemed to be very close to the spirit of old Israel. Manasseh also was fascinated by the messianic dream; he wanted to help establish the

Kingdom of God. But Jews were not even allowed to live in England. How then could they form a new Israel there? However, Manasseh was too obsessed with his idea, and was too completely immersed in the stream of that messianic century for him to give up faith in his mission. His first aim was to try to lift the English ban against Jewish immigration, a ban completely contrary to the convictions of Puritanism. This aim involved the little rabbi in an obstinate struggle which he continued despite the obstacles of international politics and the ridicule of his own congregation.

And the miracle occurred! In 1655 Manasseh ben Israel went to London, handed Cromwell a petition, and became his guest and his friend, at one with him in a messianic belief in God and His Chosen People. They shook hands in mutual understanding, the powerful ruler of England and the poor little Jewish teacher from Amsterdam. But the struggle was far from ended. Not until 1657 was Manasseh able to leave England, laden with honors as well as the gift of an annuity from Cromwell. But the great task and the great struggle had sapped the little rabbi's strength. He had almost achieved freedom for the Jews in England, but he was unable to bring the good news to Amsterdam in person. He died in Middlebury in 1657.

That was the Rabbi Manasseh ben Israel who preached to the Portuguese congregation and who taught the boy, Baruch Despinoza. A man like Rabbi Saul Levi Morteira could never become friendly with such an impassioned

unusual talent of the student, Baruch Despinoza. But this rabbi could never understand the painful depth of Baruch's spiritual yearning and the nobility of his character.

The "Tree of Life" had grown on the new Jewish soil. But Baruch knew that he was of Spanish origin and belonged to a historical tradition rich in the arts and in wisdom. Every family of the congregation was in some way still bound to the old home, from whence they received painful news and rumors still echoing the atrocities of the Inquisition. In Michael Despinoza's home, tales were told of the martyrdom of those Marranos still left on the Iberian Peninsula, and of others sacrificed by the Inquisition. And these narratives continued to live in Baruch's memory so vividly that years later he could still recall the *auto-da-fé* of 1644, in which Don Lope de Vera y Alarcon was sacrificed in Valladolid. "Judah, called the faithful, who from the midst of the flames, when they thought him already dead, began to sing a hymn, 'To Thee, Oh God, I commend my soul,' and thus chanting, gave up the ghost." And Baruch always considered the Jews as the nation that had the most martyrs and the greatest strength of soul to suffer for its faith. The horror of the Inquisition came quite close to the Amsterdam congregation when one of their own, the young humanist, Isaak de Castra-Tartos, who had grown up in Amsterdam, was burned in Lisbon in 1647. He had wished to travel all over the world, wherever there were still Christian Marranos, in order to win them back to Judaism. He was twenty-five years old when he mounted the execution pyre. His "Hear, Oh Israel!" which he screamed from the

flames, was heard as far as Amsterdam, and rang in the ears of his parents, his friends and the pupils of the "Tree of Life." Baruch was fifteen years old at the time. As Rabbi Morteira was intoning the funeral service, a radiance streamed out of this gloomy man, such as Baruch never saw in him again. The boys in the house of worship wept over the young martyr, a mere boy who had died for their faith.

But Baruch lived in Holland, in a young land of freedom, a land of Calvinist faith that was at war with that harsh, gloomy world where the stake and the torture of the Inquisition held sway. In every corner of Holland there was talk about the great questions and events of the epoch. It was a political and rebellious century. And Baruch wished to be informed about it all. The foliage of the "Tree of Life" wasn't luxuriant enough; the shadow it cast was a soothing one, but it was limited. Baruch wished to know more of the world; and for him it had to be an intellectual world.

Thus he strode forth from the Synagogue, and from the school with its theology, and entered into his century.

He felt that his duty was to think; indeed, he thought for humanity, whose ideas he anticipated by more than a hundred years.

—ERNEST RENAN

CHAPTER THREE

The Road to Freedom

I

STRANGE FRUIT was ripened by the religious air that wafted through the first forty years of the seventeenth century in Amsterdam. The spirit of Protestantism had ended its revolutionary phase and was endeavoring to establish a safe picture of the universe, a staid and bourgeois philosophy devoid of excesses and close to practical life. To be sure, mysticism and pietism had also reached across into Holland, giving rise to a vast multitude of fanatics. But most of them, for all their fanaticism, were still concerned with a law-abiding and bourgeois piety anchored as much in reason as in emotion, and finding its fulfillment in an active, everyday practice of Christianity. The period of the Enlightenment was approaching.

With this return to life, Protestantism drew nearer to Judaism; and the Jews, under the influence of Protestantism, were now once more esteemed as the people of the Bible and as those entrusted with an ancient and divine wisdom. Rabbis were acknowledged as the oldest theolo-

gians; the example of the German Humanists was followed; and Christian scholars studied with the rabbis. Even the art of interpreting the Talmud seemed to be related to a theology which no longer preached mystical and absolute dogma but desired to know and teach the laws of religious life and the real meaning of Revelation. An evangelical devotion to purity and truth arose in theologians and laymen, in churches and sects, in discussions and in books. The commercial city of Amsterdam also became a town of sectarians and popular theology.

Sectarianism was a rebellion without much spirit. The religious enthusiasm which the Reformation had awakened, had passed without having reached its ultimate goal. But it was accompanied by another important revolution: the change in social life, which was now dominated by the middle class and not by the nobility and the clergy. The Sectarians did not admit the democratization of religious life; they were still aglow with a sense of awakening and expectancy. Preachers, congregations, consistories: the whole hierarchy of a state church could not mean a fulfillment of the Reformation and Evangelical truth to them. Enthusiasm had to be kept awake and a true Evangelical spirit engendered in the community of mankind. Each one, however, had a different conception of Christianity. The number of sects was infinite, and there were always new schisms. Mennonites, Socinians, Remonstrants, Collegiants, Lucianites—it almost seemed as if each sectarian created his own sect. Religion became a factional affair.

Strange figures came to the meetings and passed through the streets of the Dutch town. They proclaimed

salvation in Evangelical freedom and the true biblical word. All were filled with hatred of Rome and of the Inquisition. They desired the happiness and the liberation of all their Christian brethren. But they were also kindly disposed toward their brothers in Israel. One of the most remarkable of these figures, a kind of lay preacher and theological sectarian, appeared on the scene in Amsterdam between 1644 and 1645. He was called "Beelthouwer," the sculptor. This honest Dutchman, who was prouder of his self-acquired theological knowledge than any scholar could be of his formal learning, appeared at the meetings of all sects, and at the religious services of every creed. With a passionate desire for knowledge, he also attended the study sessions of the Portuguese Synagogue, where with quiet assurance he would sit before the cathedra of Rabbi Morteira, or look reverently into the glowing eyes of Rabbi Manasseh, or uneasily into the smiling, boyish faces of the pupils of the "Tree of Life."

Among these latter, Baruch Spinoza was seated, always a little apart from the others, always attentive, and yet occupied with his own thoughts. Although full of desire for knowledge, he acknowledged the authority of his teachers. Yet he did not always believe every word they said, and was often rather skeptical about the much too refined subtlety of theological dialectics. The students all had the Talmud and the Bible lying before them. But the sculptor would enter the temple with many books under his arm, and with his head humbly covered in the presence of the rabbis. He did not wish to be looked upon as a stranger; he wished to study with them, believing that all

men worshipped the same God. Quietly and deliberately he would spread out the many books before him, some in Hebrew, Greek, or Latin, and others in the Dutch language. His seat looked more like a scholar's desk than a pew in a temple.

They liked this sculptor, although most of them knew only his occupation but not his name. Sometimes they would smile at him, at his Dutch seriousness, his clumsiness, his hair-splitting and his childish pride in his knowledge. His name was Jan Pietersz. Of his sculpture nothing was known, but of his unquenchable love of discourse there could be no doubt. He had written a whole series of tracts on religion, and was continually at work on new ones. His best known bore the title "The Shield of the Christian against all Non-Christians," and had appeared in 1647.

The sculptor belonged to the Mennonites, the "Doopsgezinden," a sect that disapproved of violence, oaths, war and revenge. Although they acknowledged the state as a necessity, they considered it separate from the Kingdom of Christ. In all other matters they followed upright civil ideals. Blond and broad-shouldered, the sculptor was very different from the pale, dark Portuguese Jews, whose language he understood fairly well. He listened to the lectures of the rabbis, waiting for the moment when he could contradict them or could refute them with arguments which he always had at hand. He knew the dialectic of their schools and believed that he had mastered it. But with him, this dialectic interpretation of the Holy Word assumed a special character, that of the dogmatic

sectarian obsessed with the certainty that his convictions were true. The students treated him kindly and were honored by the profound respect he showed for the rabbis and the teachers. But his manner all too often aroused secret ridicule. It was particularly among the boys that tittering would break out when the Dutchman entered the hall. They stared inquisitively at this simple, good-natured burgher. But he had no desire to attract attention by his appearance; he only wished to astound them with his theological erudition. Embarrassed, he would bury his face in the Hebrew Bible, edited by Manasseh ben Israel.

He loved to engage in polemics, in heated discussions about the correct interpretation of Scripture. He was always the leader in every debate, and always had citations at hand. The innocent malice of a schoolboy would appear on his face whenever he could embarrass the learned Rabbi Morteira with difficult questions. Even the unusual and forbidden occurred when, with the words of the Gospel and the Church Fathers, he attacked the Talmud and the Cabala. It was a strange sight indeed, in these surroundings and in this congregation, but it was symbolic of that century when in every land and in every creed, everyone was seeking for the "real faith." However, it was a verbal seeking, given over to interpreting and understanding. One might call it theoretical, for it lacked the intensity and fervor of mysticism.

This sectarian spirit was also foreign to Judaism in spite of the similarity of its theological tendency and its respect for words. It lacked the long and painful past of Judaism which had made the religion of the Synagogue

into a hard and fast cohesive, binding the Jews together. It lacked their remembrance of Spain, and it lacked their struggle to achieve a community life.

Was young Baruch conscious of this discrepancy? Did he realize the enormous tension of the times and his destiny as a Marrano? Judging by his serene face and his friendly bearing no one could tell. He was a past-master in the theological knowledge which the school imparted to a greater degree than any other. He knew the Bible, the Talmud and also the intricate, confused passages of the Cabala. He had learned to pray and to live within the community. He had a feeling of kindness and friendliness for his neighbors, and had learned the duty of mutual help. His name was always to be found in the list of charities.

The Church Council persecuted the Mennonites. Its members had long ago fixed their eyes on the sculptor. They thought it better to treat him as a rebel rather than as a buffoon. Terrible news came out of Enkhuizen about him: "that he had been expelled from the Church on account of divers major errors and pernicious ideas, and that the Municipal Council of Enkhuizen had forbidden him to live in the town." The sculptor laughed at the fear he had created, and was flattered at the same time. For fifty-eight years he had "breathed the thin air only from his lungs to his nose and back again"; now he had found out that God is ever present, that everyone moves in God and God in him, and through him. Was a new religion being born in thoughts such as these? Was this remarkable sculptor a forerunner of Baruch Spinoza?

The sculptor laughed at his enemies; he laughed at the ban of the Church; he laughed at the angry pastor who had expressed a desire to hand him over to the devil. All this was a joke to him. He even wished to carry the joke so far that the laughter would all be on his side. Jan Pietersz complained to the Church Council of Amsterdam that the pastor in Enkhuizen was a false prophet. The pastor had consigned him to the devil, but the devil had as yet failed to put in an appearance. Consequently, this Pastor Homma was a false prophet. He should not invoke Brother Satan so lightly! Indeed, he should be punished for it! The respectable Church Council was shocked by the overweening impertinence of this accusation, but what could it do? It could only send him a grave admonition since punishing him would only have increased the ridicule.

Baruch Spinoza knew all of the many jokes that were told about the sculptor; he even knew the man personally. With his schoolmates he laughed at the Dutchman's inflexible seriousness, at the pride he took in his erudition, at his broad Dutch accent, when he replied to the Spanish and Portuguese words of the rabbis. He saw him at the church gates, at the synagogue, and at the "Tree of Life." They all saw in him the strangest rebel of the religious revolt in Holland against the Church.

Actually, the conduct of the Sectarians should have bound Baruch even closer to Judaism, for the system of Judaism had remained unchanged through the centuries. But the Amsterdam congregation was greatly influenced

by the Cabala. Almost all the rabbis had fallen prey to its oriental philosophy. Both Morteira and Manasseh were influenced by it. It was a rare, luxuriant and fragrant garden, in which chaste blossoms flourished amid weeds and underbrush. The Cabala had had its origin in a deep zone of magic, but it was overloaded with oriental witchcraft and dangerous superstitions. However, there was also a deep and pure Judaism alive in it. The great religious tension of the times between the poles of Mysticism and Rationalism, delirious fervor and cool reason, now also began to operate within Judaism. It was a tension between East and West which, for the Portuguese congregation, also combined the tension generated by the destiny of the Marranos. To which of these two poles would Spinoza be drawn?

During his school days he had lived under the protection of his father's wealth and position. His home was quite near the Portuguese Synagogue. Here Baruch had grown up and had experienced all the torments of spiritual development. Bent over his books, he was alone, and in his solitude he had advanced step by step upon a road to new worlds which in the school house would have been considered forbidden ground. But the more stirring and advanced his discoveries, doubts, yearnings and his unrest became, the greater was his desire for guidance and fellowship. However, he remained alone. His teachers as well as his schoolmates did not care to abandon their secure theological foundation. Perhaps Rabbi Manasseh ben Israel might have been a suitable guide; he was a

Humanist and on friendly terms with Christians and foreigners. But he was in England, directing his great political struggle.

In his family, Baruch found no understanding of his spiritual suffering and yearning. They were surprised that his childhood had passed without play or youthful pranks. They always saw him only with his books, and heard that his accomplishments in school had brought amazement to his teachers. Michael Despinoza would not admit that his son was destined to become a scholar. He would have preferred him to become a merchant and help him in his business. But he had only to look into Baruch's face to convince himself that his son would have appeared ridiculous in the guise of a merchant. That pale, sickly, yellow-tinged face did not belong in an office nor behind a counter. In his imagination, perhaps, Michael Despinoza saw him as a rabbi, standing in the pulpit before a large, devout congregation, preaching in Portuguese the Word of God which was a guide to them on profane as well as on sacred days, that Word which was the present abode and future of the people of Israel. Baruch was always friendly and gracious, but his conversations with his father, stepmother, brothers and sisters were brief and monosyllabic. They were fond of each other, but had nothing to say. There was a change as his father aged and became gloomier and more taciturn. Sorrow and loneliness drew him closer to Baruch, who was also unhappy. Their home soon became a house of the dead. In 1649 Baruch's step-brother Isaac, who had been designated heir to Michael Despinoza's business interests, died. Two years later, after having been

married for only a year to the young Rabbi Caceras, Baruch's sister Miriam died. And in 1652 his stepmother Esther passed away. The old father was now left only with his daughter Rebecca, another son, and Baruch. He was awaiting his own death. Now his real home lay outside Amsterdam, in Ouderkerk, the Jewish cemetery.

II

Baruch's early years were assailed by storms from without as well as from within. The year 1648 witnessed many political upheavals. It saw the end of the thirty years of religious war; it divided Europe forever into two different creeds; it created new boundaries between nations and dynasties; and it prepared the way for a new social order. The independence of the Dutch Republic was acknowledged.

For Judaism, 1648 was also to be the messianic year. The cabalistic mysticism of numbers had long ago discovered that the symbol of the number 1648 denoted the birth pangs of the world which would bring forth the Messiah. And many other interpretations proclaimed that this year would be a garden of divine splendor and the birthyear of Israel's freedom. One might call these cabalistic predictions superstitions, but superstitions such as these express the sufferings, longings and the bitterly painful experiences of national history. These predictions originated in the Orient, but they were also heard in Europe, finally reaching as far west as Amsterdam. From temples, houses, from gloomy streets and from the mouths of

people who had learned in their direst need to cry out to God, this messianic prophecy had been repeated. And now they were looking for God's answer to the countless prayers, the tears of mothers, and the charred bodies of their martyrs. The messianic year 1648 was bound to bring a response; it could not deceive them; it could not pass away like any ordinary year.

This belief was unshakable and humble at the same time. No word of skepticism could influence it. Even Christians and Moslems held their breath; and the Puritans, too, awaited that messianic year. They all recognized the daily needs of those war-ridden times, and the century's yearning for God. They knew that no age since the days of the Bible and of the Crusades, had been as prepared as this one was for a miracle from God.

In the Near East there now appeared a Jewish youth repeating the fervent question of Jesus: "Whom say ye that I am?" And then he gave the answer himself: "I am He whom ye seek, the Messiah!" Sabbatai Zevi was really only the accidental realization of a desire for, and a belief in, a coming Messiah. The invocation had been too strong, the need too great. God's voice had to utter an answer by way of a human mouth. It was to be an answer to all questions, and would explain the persecutions, the insults, the tortures and the execution pyre; and it would also concern the search for peace and truth.

Sabbatai Zevi, twenty-two years old, offered himself as an answer to the question of all Jews, saying, "I am He, the Messiah!" Deeply and blissfully he believed in his mission; and thousands, hundreds of thousands believed

in it also and followed him. Tremblingly, Baruch Spinoza also lived through this messianic fever. He heard the summons and felt the religious intoxication of the whole world. He was now sixteen years of age. He could not follow the false—and yet true—oriental prophet. His natural skepticism was too great. But he understood all those who clung to him. He also understood the Christian Sectarians in Holland, and all those who desired to obtain a new reason for living and a new union through the experiences of the community. That was, after all, the deepest meaning of the new piety that had now awakened in all creeds and in all nations. And it was also the desire of those lonely spirits who had followed a solitary path and now could abide it no longer, desiring to join the community of mankind. As early as the year 1623, Johannes Kepler had made a confession that was singularly characteristic of those times, which stood impotently between the Church and the world. "I decided to cast off hypocrisy and, in those matters which concern God, to use a conscientious sincerity. For this the clericals rage at me and the laymen think me foolish."

In that year of the Messiah and of European peace, Rembrandt painted his "Samaritan," that profound depiction of brotherly charity and human compassion. He desired to make it the answer to decades of war, and also the answer to the messianic yearning in the Jewish quarter, on whose borders he lived in quiet and poverty. Especially in those agitated years did he love the Jews more than any other people. He loved their lucid wisdom, their gentle humanity, which stood in salutary contrast to the boastful

pride of many Dutchmen. In that year he painted the figures of rabbis, and dressed them in the costly garb of the rich, instead of in their dark and severe habitual attire. It almost seemed as though he wished to take away the wealth of those whom he despised, and give it to those who were his brothers in humility and kindness. Besides, these Jews understood the meaning of sorrow.

Rembrandt was not destined for happiness. His wife as well as his dreams had been taken from him. He was allowed to keep only his boy, Titus. Everything else was taken from him, his furniture and his pictures, even the guardianship of his son, and finally, his beloved house in the Joden Bree Straat. Embittered and alone, he would wander through the streets of the Jewish quarter. Here if he raised his head, he would see faces that understood him, whereas on the other side of the bridge, people laughed at his misfortunes. Spanish words of greeting, a hand clasp, sometimes only the sight of the bearded rabbis were evidence to him of understanding and sympathy.

On such wanderings, Rembrandt might also have encountered Baruch. To be sure, he looked different from the princely Titus and his blond cheerfulness. But the artist's eye would have recognized in such a pale face an expression that should not be lost. He might have used a Jewish boy like this one as a subject for Jesus in the temple; in him, too, there were wisdom and piety.

The struggle that Baruch now had to wage was one between human bondage and freedom. Happiness in such bondage is greater and gentler than that of freedom.

Baruch was almost envious of his schoolfellows, his teachers, and his family, who could live happily in dependence on the old religion. But the power behind his striving for truth, which could not be stayed by any word—not even the Word of God—was greater than any comfort he might have obtained from the happiness of human companionship.

Baruch, only sixteen years old, knew that the path on which he was now taking his first steps led to painful solitude. He remembered Uriel da Costa, upon whose humbled and shamed body, lying outside the gates of the synagogue, even his childish feet had trod. But only in truth and in the rarefied atmosphere of pure thought would he be able to live and grow up to be a man. He was too proud to humiliate himself like Uriel, and too honest to speak words that he did not believe. The mind, the creative power of thought, a world above this world would have to be his home. And for this, he would have to sacrifice his life within the community. He had no desire to do so, nor would he do it willingly. But if his destiny demanded it of him, he would be ready.

When Baruch had reached the decision to free his thoughts and his philosophy of life from theological dogma, and enter into a new secular world, he was more interested in the experiences of this new, broad world than in his farewell to the old one, and in his prospective loneliness. He was aware of the martyrdom of his people, which was very far from being over. The heroic sacrifice of these Jews was great, but they could also feel happy in

having suffered and died for their community. Uriel da Costa had vacillated from one church to another in order to arrive at the truth, much as one might go from one physician to another in order to find health. Baruch did not seek truth with the idea of making it his personal property, nor did he think of himself as being sick. He simply did not believe any more in collective salvation. Calmly he declared, "I permit each person to live in his own way and, if he so desires, to die for his presumed salvation, if only I may be permitted to live for truth." To be allowed to live for the truth: that was his new, boundless ambition. To such heights one can only strive alone; in company with others, there is the constant menace of a fall.

The experience of such an emancipation is always tragic, even if the one who has freed himself does not have to sacrifice his life. But should he become a liberator of others, then his act becomes heroic. However, that is a destiny which is often recognized only after the death of the liberator. Socrates and Giordano Bruno died for their love of the truth; and Campanella, Galileo and Kepler had to suffer unspeakably for its sake. When the mystic Jakob Boehme, as a youth of twenty-five, found the light, it seemed to him "as though he had risen out of death into life." Although differing in erudition and character, all these thinkers were alike in their decision to leave the community in search of truth. Friedrich Hölderlin wrote the drama of this farewell when he composed his "Empedocles": "Deep-rooted, his mighty yearning wells up out

of his soul. His achievement is great, his words magnificent; they change the world."

Empedocles, however, was old, but Baruch was only a youth.

III

He had now reached the age when one reads the most. Every book signified a journey of discovery into unknown lands, and an expansion of the world such as actual travelling could never accomplish. But each book also meant a step forward on the road to self-knowledge. The experiences that life did not as yet offer were gained from the printed word. He owed much to the school and his father's home. They were meant to lead him into a community that would satisfy all his longings: a community of knowledge. For learning was the one thing that could transport him beyond himself. His ego was as yet feeble and unformed, but he had a deep-seated inclination toward melancholy.

Baruch read a great deal, but not at random and always in the same spiritual vein that had originated in the "Tree of Life." Only when the spiritual resources of the school had been entirely exhausted did he attempt discoveries and experiments in new fields. The traditional education knew no other spirit and no other literature than that of theology. It was the heritage of the Middle Ages. New currents and temporal motifs also emerged, but always through theological channels.

Therefore his first steps on the road to philosophy were directed toward the conquering of the traditional religious philosophy of Spanish Judaism. Yet indirectly, this conquest led him to classical philosophy, to Platonism and Aristotelianism, and thus also to metaphysics and ethics. But the decisive effect of his reading was his awakening to philosophy. Here, Baruch entered into a flourishing garden, tended by reverent hands. He found, first of all, Maimonides and his "Guide for the Perplexed." It was a guide for those without faith, vacillating between religion and reason, between the Bible and Aristotle. Then there were Chasdai Cresca, Levi ben Gerson and Abraham ibn Esra. They were representative of a mentality which had been nurtured on the Bible, classical antiquity, Islam and Spain, but which had remained within the bounds of Jewish religiosity and the laws and traditions of the Jewish community.

An attempt has occasionally been made to establish a relationship between these "influences," as represented by the older thinkers of the Bible, the Talmud and the Cabala, and the philosophy of Spinoza. The influences were there, but what do they prove? Baruch's path was not determined by such encounters on the periphery of his boyhood years. True, he was immersed in all the sources of Jewish tradition. But one must not try to discount the one factor that influenced him most in his later doctrines. It would be a petty and unprofitable undertaking to delve into a man's past wisdom, into what he had learned and read, for an interpretation of his life work which had its

roots entirely within the center of his personal existence. Moreover, Baruch's interest in this old world of thought meant much less the acquisition of traditional lore than the need and hunger for truth and the thirst for knowledge.

Slowly and with difficulty, he groped his way across the borders of Jewish literature. In the New Testament as well as in the Dialogues of Leone Ebreo, he still remained within the realm of Jewish thought. But with Giordano Bruno, for the first time he stepped into a new, atheological world. As a good scholar of the Talmud, Baruch was probably acquainted with the story about the pious Hillel, who once said to his pupils: "I must go home to wait on my guest." When the pupils, in surprise, asked him about this unknown guest, Hillel answered, "It is my soul." Baruch, too, became a guest to himself, and returned home to his soul. He sat at his own table and remained alone.

Baruch overcame the melancholy of his boyhood days only by intense application to his studies. He acquired a great deal of learning in all the academic branches, more than any other pupil in the "Tree of Life." He knew four languages: Spanish, Portuguese, Hebrew, and Dutch. And he also began to learn Latin in order to gain access to secular knowledge. It was said that, like many of his schoolmates, he took private lessons from a German student. His friends and schoolmates noticed that he was freeing himself from the subjects taught in their school; and their intercourse with him was fraught with suspicion.

Their mistrust was also aroused by a secret realization that here, in their midst, was a surpassingly great spirit. Suspicion is always the first reaction to greatness.

At the school, students huddled together in groups and whispered about their comrade, who was advancing more and more beyond their world. When his school days were over, Baruch was no longer under the observation of his schoolmates and teachers. Yet his freedom was actually only apparent and superficial. Even though his studies were no longer carried on in the school, yet he remained in close association with it and especially with the rabbis. Jealousy of his unconventional views and his eagerness for worldly wisdom, accompanied him at every step.

It has been said that his doubts and inner conflicts became more and more known to his schoolmates, and that two young men of his acquaintance persuaded him to express his real convictions to them in order to denounce him to the rabbis. The crisis through which Baruch was now passing was created not only by the new ideas he was confronted with, but also by the controversy that was raging about the old ones. Study alone does not constitute a substitute for a lost good. The kind of grief that comes from the threatened loss of a valuable possession filled Baruch in those critical years.

At this time a curious personage appeared in Amsterdam. To a young man of weak will, such an encounter might have become a fatal matter. But Baruch Spinoza, in spite of all the inner difficulties he was experiencing, preserved his equilibrium. Through all the risks of new ideas, he was determined to safeguard his salvation and not to be

destroyed like Uriel da Costa. In Franciscus van den Enden he encountered an extraordinary individual whose strange destiny brought home to him a realization of those divided and convulsed times. The life of this man embodied all the inner tensions of the century, which tried to pave a way through religious wars and the Inquisition, through mysticism as well as rationalism. Franciscus van den Enden could not follow the way of sects nor of churches; but on the other hand, he could not stand aside and calmly contemplate the great changes being wrought in those times. Thus he fell into ways of adventure and desperation which led him to a bitter and gruesome end.

Franciscus van den Enden was born in Antwerp in 1602. He grew up in a Catholic family, with Catholic convictions. No other future was conceivable to him than that of the priesthood, and no other deliverance from the great spiritual and worldly distress seemed possible to him than through the medium of the Church. He was educated by the Augustinians, and then fell into the hands of the Jesuits, who finally accepted him into their order. He studied philosophy, law and medicine in Louvain, and enjoyed great scholarly renown while still a very young man. All indications made it seem probable that, in the service of his order, he would be a great scholar and a valiant supporter of the Church in those countries that were so dangerous for Catholicism.

But the life of Franciscus van den Enden did not run smoothly nor securely. Questions of conscience forced him to renounce his ecclesiastical career. He had been infected

by the free-thought movement and the sectarianism of the age. He could no longer exist under the severe religious discipline of the Jesuits, but he did not sever his connection with the Church. He wanted to continue living with his religion, but he abandoned the profession of the priesthood. He was now pointed out as the "fugitive Jesuit," which was more than a phrase; it was his destiny.

This destiny drove him out of his home and away from his old surroundings. It led him, with his family, to Amsterdam where, in despair, he sought to lead an orderly existence in which he could support himself with his wife and children. His attempt to eke out a living as a bookseller failed; it only resulted in a burden of considerable debt. His distress grew ever greater as his family increased. One child after another was borne to the baptismal font of the Catholic Church, "The Post Horn."

The troubled existence of this family was known in all Amsterdam; it was also known that this Catholic was a dangerous freethinker. And thus every kind of suspicion was aroused against him: the distrust of the rich against the poor, the distrust of the Calvinist Church against a Catholic, and finally, the general distrust in those days against heresy and latitudinarianism.

As a matter of fact, the adventurous life of this "fugitive Jesuit" was in itself enough to create suspicion. Rumor had it that Franciscus was a secret emissary between Amsterdam and Madrid. It was said that on his advice Spain had signed a peace agreement with the Netherlands. Important political opportunities were said to have been offered him since 1648. All of this was prob-

ably legend without the least iota of truth. Its importance lay only in the fact that this ex-Jesuit, freethinker, and bankrupt book dealer should ever have been deemed capable of political missions of this kind.

Franciscus van den Enden was at this time a teacher in Amsterdam. He had founded a private Latin school which had a good reputation, but was considered by some as the home of the worst heresy. The education which he imparted was conducted without any theological or church ideals, but in the liberal spirit of a new era. In the first place, it was the Latin language which was taught in this school. Latin was the language of learning and of the new philosophy. Franciscus himself was also well versed in mathematics and in the natural sciences, knowledge of which he imparted to his pupils. And to those pupils nearest to his heart, he confided the experiences of his life, affording them an insight into an existence which had stolen out of the guarded walls of the Jesuit college in order to sally forth into all the confusion and adventures of those uncertain times.

Franciscus van den Enden was a humanist. He considered the spirit of classical antiquity greater than the Christian confusion of the Counter-Reformation. Only the new philosophy seemed to him to contain a ray of light directed toward a better future. It was in accordance with his humanistic ideas that he gave his lessons. Following a humanistic pattern, he manifested his love of the classical drama and theater. He wrote plays in the classical manner, with pagan sentiments. Of the ancient dramatists, he preferred Terence. To the horror of the outraged citizens of

Amsterdam and, in spite of all the opposition the Church could bring to bear, he arranged for theatrical performances of his plays. Baruch Spinoza was one of those who attended and, in these performances he imbibed the atmosphere of the classical spirit.

When Spinoza entered this school, Franciscus van den Enden was already an old man, but his inner and outer life was less secure than ever. He still had the reputation of being a "libertine," and a freethinker who had somehow escaped imprisonment and could not be identified with any sect or faction. As a teacher he had an income and, in his pupils, he had a large circle on whom he exercised great influence. But this did not satisfy him. He also had a great many enemies who fought him both openly and secretly.

His years as a teacher in Amsterdam were the best of the poor, learned Doctor's life. But the world would not leave him in peace; and even if it had, he probably would not have endured it for long. The attacks on him became more and more venomous and hateful. His school was threatened, and he was finally unable to continue. The path of his life up to that time had led from Antwerp to Amsterdam. But now the air in these Netherlands had become too stuffy for him. He had to proceed to a new, a larger world. It had to be beyond these borders, just as all dreams are outside actual time and space. Once again Franciscus wished to return to his earliest years, to his studies in medicine. Again he wished to begin at the beginning. In 1661, this still unwearied and unfazed old man left Amsterdam and went to Paris, where he became a physician. For a while things went well with him, but then

this profession, too, was over with. It seemed that Franciscus would have to die as a simple schoolmaster after all. In Paris he also founded a Latin school, for which, however, he first had to seek pupils; and in a large city like Paris that was more difficult than it had been in Amsterdam. He grew morose and embittered, but was far from resigned to his destiny, which to him seemed unworthy of his talents.

Thus, in a fever of excitement and with the most fantastic ideas in his head, he plunged into politics. He was living in a foreign land dominated by an entirely different spirit from that of the Netherlands. He was a foreigner, homeless, a revolutionary. What could he do in the country of Louis XIV? For him there was only one answer: rebellion! The old schoolmaster joined forces with all who claimed to be revolutionists. The reason for their revolt was indifferent to him; he did not even understand it. But he felt that he must protest against a world that persecuted him, that did not acknowledge his genius, and that did not grant him the possibility of earning his daily bread. "Anyone who wishes destruction is my friend," said the ex-Jesuit. For he, too, wished to destroy now that hate against the world was the strongest passion that remained within him.

He fell in with a company of French noblemen who were conspiring to foment a rebellion against Louis XIV. It was a hopeless and ill-conceived adventure that nonetheless aroused the historical imagination of the old schoolmaster. Perhaps someone had offered him money, of which he was in great need. At any rate, he wished to

take part in this enterprise, in which, even had it been successful, he would only have played a ridiculous role.

But the outcome was disastrous. The rebellion missed fire, and the traitors were arrested. The poor Doctor, who had loved to recite Latin verse in the classroom, extolling the heroism of those who fought for liberty, was taken to the Bastille and condemned to death. He was laughed at, he who had been a Jesuit and had passed for an Atheist, but who was really only a wretched, frustrated schoolmaster. It was also charged that he had planned to abduct the Dauphin during a hunting party. And now in a foreign land, as the old chronicle has it, he was to play the part of "the clapper in a cowbell."

Franciscus van den Enden's fellow conspirators were beheaded. But when the schoolmaster's turn came, the executioner made a grimace: for this one, the sword was too good; let him be hanged! And that is how, at the age of seventy-four, the life of this extraordinary and highly gifted man came to an end. He had been the teacher of Baruch Spinoza.

IV

In the old Doctor's school Baruch, for the first time, made some real friends. There was Dirck Kerckrinck from Hamburg, whom the Doctor was preparing for the University, and who later became a noted physician very early in life. Baruch's problems and nature were quite unfamiliar to Dirck, and yet, this vigorous and unaffected youth and the quiet, introspective, thoughtful Baruch were great

friends. Then, too, there was Lodewijk Meyer, a young poet immersed in literary convention. He later became director of the Amsterdam theater. Lodewijk also had philosophical leanings which enabled him to follow the road from Descartes to Spinoza. All of them, including their teacher, subscribed to pantheistic views. That was the secret of their heresy and their free-thinking.

The new philosophy with which Baruch had become acquainted in the home of Franciscus van den Enden was that of Bacon, Hobbes and Descartes. Opposed to confusion, unrest and doubt, this new philosophy was governed by the will to clarification. Certainty was to be acquired by logical thinking and by the experiences of nature. Bacon declared the ideal of an unprejudiced knowledge of nature. Hobbes was the philosopher of the mathematical science of nature. And Descartes, the most universal thinker of his time, was the liberator and logical leader in all aspects of pure thought. They all wished to get out of the "woods," and to seek roads that were even and clear.

It was their light that kindled Spinoza's questing soul. Eagerly he took up the new thought as well as the pantheistic views of the school of Franciscus van den Enden. Even as early as this, there arose in him a presentiment of ideas far beyond what the new thinkers had as yet taught. Even at this time he dreamed of synthesizing the ideas of his century. These philosophers worked out the laws of their ideas and took a long step ahead on the road of time and knowledge. But with Spinoza, there was more than that. He had a mission to fulfill. He had to make his way

into the future from a very distant past, for he had been brought up in religious surroundings. This fact placed him in the company of the prophets and the leaders of his religion. It made him one of the "illuminati" and one of the elect, whereas the others were only scholars.

The destiny of the Marranos was also fulfilled in him. They had not achieved a synthesis between their Catholic past and Jewish present, between Spanish culture and Talmudic wisdom, between the Dominican Inquisition and the freedom of the Netherlands. Most of these people grew up in spiritual blindness, reared in the faith that all truth could be found in the dogma of their religion. Of course, Baruch had no desire to give up his past or his God. But he understood that God meant the whole universe of nature, man and thought. God was more than the Word of the Bible; He was more than Scripture. Religion was something different from theology. Baruch had a new conception of God which went far beyond what Descartes and the others, who still held to theology, had dared to express. He did not think of God as being outside of the world but entirely within it, acting as its motive force. This interpretation classed him as an "atheist" in the minds of many. Actually, however, it signified a rebirth of religion.

Pantheism was a state of mind characteristic of the times. However, it was a religious quest, not a fulfillment. Out of this pantheism a great philosophic conception grew up in Spinoza, a new pattern of existence. He knew that men, like all life, were a part of Nature, in which God's truth was fulfilled. At a later period in his life he wrote

in a letter, "Actually, if you find that God speaks more clearly and effectively in Holy Writ than in the light of that natural understanding which He has vouchsafed unto us, and which, in His divine wisdom, He constantly preserves secure and inviolate, then you have sufficient reason to subjugate your intelligence to those views which you attribute to Holy Writ." This was a liberation which extended beyond mere reform. Spinoza also said, "Truth cannot be at war with truth," and thus put an end forever to the Scholastic doctrine of the two-fold truth. Should two different truths exist, one for the God of the Bible, and one for the human understanding? How small is God if He cannot withstand the light of reason! And how poor is reason if it knows no other than worldly standards of measure! People have fashioned a God out of words, out of miraculous legends and fossilized laws. Thus He has become a God of Scripture and not a God of life. We must extend our yearning much further, in length as well as in breadth, so that it can embrace the whole world. Only then can it reach God, Whom people are inclined to see as a prototype of themselves. The love of God is not a gift of priests and churches, but rather an assignment to us for the entire span of our lives. As far as Spinoza was concerned, nothing could ever "separate him from his love and knowledge of God."

His belief was the result of logical reasoning which developed into mysticism. "And that is why I have said that I *believe* but not that I *know* mathematically everything that God said to the prophets, etc.—because I absolutely believe but do not mathematically know that the

prophets were the trusted councillors and faithful emissaries of God." It was a man with religion who spoke thus. He was imbued with his people's age-old belief in God, with the memory of the martyrs among his forefathers, and with an awareness of their Marrano destiny. We always live by faith; yet this faith is given to us as a task. God does not make himself known and loved at once. He does not wish us to fall into stagnation. We must seek Him to the end of the world and to the end of our days. We are pilgrims on the roads to God, placed among the ages and the nations, always wandering, always seeking.

Once again the spirit of the Marranos emerged in Baruch Spinoza. He lived in Holland, spoke Portuguese, had learned to pray in Hebrew, and was ready to take a decisive step into a new world and a new century. His was a genuine religious achievement. It freed the Marranos from their Catholic past and from their rabbinical present. This achievement was rebellious and humble at the same time: "I acknowledge by this (and it is this that gives me the greatest satisfaction and peace of mind) that everything happens by the might of the Omnipotent, and by His unchangeable decrees." Spinoza did not deny the right of prayer, for our intelligence is not great enough to determine all the means which God possesses for leading us to a love of Him and to our salvation. Once again the messianic call went out to an unknown being who took upon himself all the distress of the times, of its beliefs and its thoughts, and answered with the words, "I am he." Once again a heroic decision was made by a spiritual youth to free a suffering and blinded world through the

medium of ideas. A decision of this kind almost always means self-destruction. For he who loves truth above all else must accept the hatred of men; he who brings light must die in darkness. A mere youth arose and tore down walls. But then he was himself seized and hurled to the ground. Hate and malevolence strode rough-shod over him. But presently the downtrodden youth rose again, and the spirit was freed.

with him, the poor wretch was living in concealment. It was curiosity that prompted us, as well as others, to go to see this strange creature.

—J. C. STURM,
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CHAPTER FOUR

The Great Curse

I

THE MOST striking personality that Baruch Spinoza met in the home of Doctor Franciscus was a child. Clara Maria van Enden was twelve years old, but her face and character were precocious, and her erudition was already so great that she assisted her father with his Latin classes. Spinoza's biographer, Colerus, wrote of her, "Spinoza often said that he had grown fond of her and wished to marry her even though she was rather frail and deformed, having been attracted to her only by her keen mind and intellectual attainments." The statement regarding his intention of marrying her must be accepted with caution. But Baruch's fondness of Clara Maria was an experience that influenced the youth deeply and permanently. For the first time a girl had entered his young life. She was still a child, but she had precociously outgrown her childhood. The girl's unattractive person concealed an intelligence

that divined and understood Baruch's difficult conflicts and questionings. These two young people found each other as they stood apart from and beyond the other pupils in the Doctor's school. Better than anyone else they both understood their romantic teacher, who lived entirely in the realm of his studies, always occupied with stirring and adventurous matters, hardly aware of reality but opposing and defying the powers that be. Baruch and Clara Maria had to become friends, and they felt that they belonged to each other. For both of them only a spiritual existence was possible. This realization which, for most people, only comes very late in life, came to them in their early youth.

Baruch had a feeling of pity and sympathy for this girl with her childish body and precocious mind. It was the feeling of an elder brother for a younger sister, who lived near him and was in need of his aid, admiring him, and wishing to help him, too, and understand him by virtue of her intuition and intelligence. Baruch knew that "amongst friends everything, and above all, everything spiritual, must be shared." The companionship of this child was a great blessing to him. She would glance over his shoulder at his books or notes, give him her hand, and smile at him when he needed it most. Yes, they were brother and sister, both somewhat afraid of the vast world about them and their own chaste innocence.

Clara Maria desired to overcome her physical handicaps by cultivating a will, hard as steel. Hence she became a scholar and an assistant to her scatterbrained and hapless father. The Doctor's pupils and guests were all fond of

her. But the greatest regard was shown her by Baruch Spinoza and Dirck Kerckrinck.

Baruch's admiration was quiet, modest and humble. Kerckrinck wooed more volubly and concretely for Clara Maria's favor. He made her a present of a costly string of pearls; he demonstrated by words and deeds the power of his wealth, his feelings and his temperament. Was it, perhaps, this contrast between them that later influenced Clara Maria to accept his suit? Her friendship for Baruch had its roots in spiritual propinquity. But does not such propinquity imperil one's entire future existence? In Kerckrinck she encountered the complete antithesis of her own being and destiny. Unlike her, he was vigorous, young and healthy; and so Clara Maria married Dirck Kerckrinck while she was still very young. They left Amsterdam and went to Hamburg. There, the difference in their character and temperament led to conflict and hatred, finally culminating in Kerckrinck's attempting to murder his wife. For Baruch this marriage closed the first and only episode in his life involving a woman. It is unimportant to know whether this interlude was love or friendship. Certain it is, that when Clara Maria accepted Kerckrinck's suit, something was shattered in Baruch. From then on, only one love filled his life and only one happiness was perceived by him. He now knew "that our greatest joy exists in our love of God, and that every love, of necessity, results from the acknowledgment of God." For this acknowledgment he would now live and fight.

The struggle began in his own family.

On the 28th of March, 1654, Michael Despinoza

died. All had grown quiet around him; death had thinned the ranks of his family, and his old age had been embittered and lonely. There remained to him only his daughter, Rebecca, who kept house for him, and his young son-in-law, Samuel de Caceres, who at twenty-three was already a father and a widower. And finally there was Baruch, who lived with his father until the latter's death.

Michael Despinoza had noticed the change in the youth, a change that had taken place under his very eyes. He saw the boy's melancholy, his restlessness and his pale face. Was Baruch sick? This question worried his father, who shook his head doubtfully as he watched the boy's endless studying, by night as well as by day. The rumors of Baruch's tendency to freethinking had also reached his ears. But this did not disturb him overmuch. He was not a conservative; he understood religion in a freer and more human way, being himself under the influence of Rabbi Manasseh ben Israel. What Baruch thought concerning theological questions did not strike him as especially important. As long as Baruch did not wish to be a merchant, he could study and become a scholar. His talents were brilliant, his character noble and distinguished; he would make his way. What did it matter what views and conceptions he adhered to? With regard to the observance of the prescribed rituals, the father was none too meticulous himself. He was a liberal, and his time was devoted to a life of activity.

But from other quarters, Baruch was threatened with danger and hatred which were held in leash only as long as his father was still alive. Of Samuel de Caceres it was

said that he was "a great preacher and an extremely curious fellow." He was only a little older than Baruch, but so different, so bound by convention, so possessed with hypocrisy, that the difference between the two young men was visible and palpable. Caceres had no higher ambition than a strict obedience to Jewish law. Every independent step in the realm of thought or in life constituted a sin in his judgment. The spirit of Rabbi Morteira lived again in this pupil. He was a zealot and had an uncharitable soul. It was with suspicion that Caceres regarded Baruch's worldly studies and the taciturnity of his nature. Baruch's brother-in-law never spoke to him about questions of their common education. Caceres detected heresy in Baruch, a tendency to follow in the steps of Uriel da Costa. He also sensed the presence of a great and independent intellect inexorably following its own dictates. This youth was a danger to the future of the congregation, a danger to all creeds in those troublous times. With boyish pride, Caceres not only perceived this contrast, but decided to oppose Spinoza. He had no desire to give battle for any personal satisfaction of his own, but for the principles by which he lived. The fact that they were related aroused no consideration on his part. The inquisitor, Caceres, intended to pursue the heretic until he had annihilated him. He was Spinoza's enemy, consciously and willfully bent on his destruction.

The opposition was dormant for a time. Only after the death of Spinoza's father did it break out into the open. Caceres proceeded with deliberate cunning. He did not show his hand at once. He could not fight against ideas

for his material interests as for the sake of his ideals. For Baruch believed in the goodness of people.

Obviously, this matter of inheritance was only the accidental motive of the conflict. The real matter at issue was the honor of his father's name. Still, the conflict was led by those who, in Michael Despinoza's opinion, should have been closest to Baruch. They wished to humble him, but they also wished to impoverish him and force him into deprivation and the life of a beggar. Then, they thought, his taste for his heretical studies would disappear.

Baruch wished to act; indeed, he was forced to act, although he was not, nor would he ever be a man of action. He felt himself degraded by this conflict and by the weapons that he was constrained to use. But he did not care about the conflict as such, and he did not care about achieving a victory.

As his right of inheritance was a matter for civil law, no religious court of justice could render a verdict. To the Dutch court, however, it was a matter of complete indifference whether he was a loyal Jew or an apostate. It awarded him his inheritance, and Caceres and Rebecca were defeated. But a victory that awarded him his property only was not one to Baruch's satisfaction. His battle had not been for gain, but rather for honesty and liberty. He was not satisfied with this victory by means of a court verdict. He required a different kind of humiliation for his family, one that would also free him of them forever. He came to a decision of such heroic magnitude that it gave his life an entirely new direction and decided his entire future. This decision was strange and incomprehensible to

all those who heard of it. It issued from a different aspect of life, one in which property, profit and gain have no value. Baruch had obtained his inheritance by the decision of a court of law; thereby he had also acquired the legal right to renounce his property and contemptuously fling it at those who had wished to acquire it by theft. He took only a bed and a blanket; the rest he rejected and without a word, departed from the house in which he had passed his childhood, and in which his father had died.

Such an act of independence and voluntary renunciation can only be acknowledged in silence. Never again did Baruch hear from his family. He was now quite poor; but poverty made him independent and free to choose any walk of life he might care to follow. Henceforth no material loss could affect him, for he did not recognize any advantage in possessions. Once, at a later time, when he discovered that a man who owed him two hundred guilders had failed, he could only smile at his loss, saying, "I shall have to economize in my habits in order to make up this small loss; it is at such a price that one buys one's equanimity." That was what Baruch had thought when he punished his enemies by making them a present of his inheritance: it was the price at which he bought his equanimity.

To Rabbi Morteira, too, there had come rumors of the heretical opinions expressed by his former pupil, Baruch, opinions which did not harmonize with Jewish doctrines; and also, it was said, that he did not observe the ritual laws. Such accounts of neglect and apostasy in religious matters came to the Rabbi's ears often now. The freedom-loving tendencies of the times and of the land

increasingly menaced the Portuguese congregation, this last, anxiously guarded home of the emigrants from the Spanish Inquisition. Even if everyone else should refuse to act in defence of this home, Rabbi Morteira would still struggle on. He had been the judge in the case of Uriel da Costa, and he would proceed against anyone else who, like him, would violate the law and menace the peace of the congregation. But Rabbi Morteira was neither a Spaniard nor a Marrano. There was no Catholic past in the history of his family; there had been no suffering for the faith. His religion was an old inheritance, not an assignment in a new land and in a new era. Rabbi Morteira grew more and more severe; it was all beyond his comprehension. The expression on his face seemed to change; it became that of the Grand Inquisitor. He was not happy about the task which history was obliging him to undertake. He was terrified by the possibility of having to make an enemy of his pupil Spinoza. But he also trembled for the salvation of his pupil's soul.

He could not yet believe the rumors; he still denied them. But he had to admit to himself that he had sensed the danger for a long time, and had heard Baruch himself utter words which were filled with theological skepticism and pointed to a realm of thought dominated by a godless spirit. The Rabbi was seized with unrest; he wished to help and to avoid the evil. Much as a sick person does not tell the truth about the fatal nature of his illness, and hopes thereby to avoid death, so Morteira wished to deny his pupil's lack of faith as long as possible. Had it been

anyone else, the Rabbi's task would have been easier. But he loved this pupil more than any of the others.

In his mind's eye he saw the pale, sickly, boyish face with its ardent expression, full of fervor and humility. It was not the look of a traitor to God, of a faithless one, of a frivolous youth. He remembered the questions Baruch used to ask him in a low voice while at school, questions about the mystery of God's wisdom, questions such as only the pious and saintly ask. At that time Morteira had thought, "Here we have a great future rabbi, to whose word all the islands will pay heed. Yes, he will become a servant of God, as Isaiah foretells, 'A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth.' " Was it possible that Rabbi Morteira had made such a mistake? Did it have to be just this one, whom he loved the most, who would quench the flax and break the reed? He would like to pray to God, "Do not let this one betray Your holy law. Take another one, if I must punish someone!" He wished to speak to Baruch himself, speak to him alone.

He would speak to him in the Synagogue, in this temple that the first Marranos had built in Holland. He would remind him of the destiny of his forefathers and of the accursed end of Uriel da Costa. The old man would preach to this one youth as he had never preached before to thousands; for this one was worth more than the whole congregation. Already footsteps could be heard in the vestibule of the synagogue; then he heard the timid opening of the door. Small and pale, Baruch stood before him,

at a respectful distance from his old master. Now everything would be decided and explained, now that they were both alone. Only books surrounded them, and the refracted light from the tall church windows.

II

With an embarrassed smile on his lips, Baruch waited for the questions of his teacher, waited for his sentence. Rabbi Morteira spoke of the dangers of the times, in which the hopes of all were at their highest point, and the realization of these hopes at their lowest ebb. Every buffoon believed he knew the truth about God. Heresy and delusion crept babbling through the streets of Amsterdam. Reason had become presumptuous and dared to interpret the laws of the universe differently from the way in which Revelation had taught them. Men desired to know and to possess everything, but they had lost everything, because they had lost their faith. And then Morteira recalled the strange destiny of the Portuguese congregation, and the new home that the bewildered and persecuted people had found in Amsterdam. However, it would have been better had he not touched upon this subject, for at these words, the smile disappeared from Baruch's face. He looked questioningly at his teacher who, after all, was neither Spanish nor Portuguese. Then the Rabbi went on to talk about faith and heresy, and about the rumors and dangers with which Baruch was surrounded. Hesitatingly and reluctantly he reported that two pupils had told him about what Baruch had said of the corporeality of God,

and of the angels, and of the immortality of the soul; and also what he had said in criticism of the truth of the Bible. And once again, Baruch's only reaction was a feeling of astonishment. Again he wondered what people wanted of him, amazed that two young people could pose questions to him so that they could bring distorted answers to the Rabbi; that they could simulate friendship, and plan his destruction. This fact staggered him far more than the dangers in which he now found himself, even overshadowing the threat of excommunication. He would have to express his anger at this betrayal; he would have to speak out his shame, telling them that more than any other sentiment, he felt pity for the scoundrels who had perpetrated this ignominy! Let them say of him what they would, such witnesses were contemptible.

While Morteira, to the great torment both of himself and of his pupil, continued his cross-examination, Baruch kept thinking of this treachery and of man's capacity for hate, which was now flaring up around him. He longed for quiet and solitude, and a life far from the wickedness of men. Now he understood the blessings of asceticism and the monastic life. Poverty and chastity were also well known to him; but he could be obedient only to God and to truth, never to men. That was what Baruch was thinking of now. But Rabbi Morteira kept on asking his questions about faith. They sounded more like a school examination than the preliminary to a dread judgment.

At the end of this catechism, Morteira had to admit that his pupil was no longer a Jew. Hence, he summoned together the elders of the congregation. It was their desire

to bring Baruch back to the faith. They threatened, they beseeched, and then they excluded him from the community for a period of thirty days. But all this left him indifferent; he wasn't at all interested. Now he was sure of the road he would have to follow; he knew that there was no higher goal than that of acquiring knowledge of the truth. They shouted at him that he was betraying God and his people; that, like a boastful boy, he was denying the existence of the most sacred beliefs held by Jews and Christians alike. Baruch knew that he had never before understood the Holy of Holies as clearly and as truly as now. But what did these men know about him? They were the heirs of the Inquisition, weaker and less horrible than those others, but as stern in their pronouncements and as fearful of the coming of a new spirit. In the end they offered him money if he would renounce his false doctrines. If he would again be faithful to them, they promised to support him and assure him a free and scholarly existence. How little they understood Spinoza, who desired nothing else than poverty and freedom! His answer to all the threats and pleadings was bound to be a grim farewell.

What happened after his talks with the rabbis went on in Spinoza's absence. It concerned laws which had no meaning for him any longer. Once again the spectacle of an inquisition reached dramatic heights; once again the power of a church demanded the sacrifice of an inspired youth. The pathetic drama was publicly presented to the gaze of the watching mob, but the action was only in words; no human life was destroyed. The conclusion of the drama was quite different from what had been desired;

it only created a greater and deeper feeling of peace in the victim. In the light of the black altar-candles, to the accompaniment of a wailing ram's horn, the words of the curse were pronounced. Through this ban and through his poverty Spinoza gained his own soul. His enemies had wished to damn a heretic and to drive him out of every home. But through a mouldering portal of hate and scorn, a saint marched on toward the light.

On the 27th of July, 1656, one day after the Amsterdam courts had declared the insolvency of Rembrandt's estate, in the densely packed synagogue the great ban of excommunication was pronounced against Baruch Despinoza, who, however, was not present. Terrible were the words of expulsion as they droned forth from the altar over the awe-stricken people: "In accordance with the decree of the Angels and the judgment of the Saints, we banish, expel, execrate and curse Baruch de Espinoza; with the consent of Holy God, and by agreement of this entire holy congregation; by virtue of the sacred Books of the Law with the six hundred and thirteen precepts inscribed therein; with the ban with which Joshua banned Jericho; with the curse with which Eliza cursed the boys; and with all the maledictions as they are written in the Law! Cursed shall he be in the daytime, and cursed also by night! Cursed shall he be when he lieth down, and cursed when he riseth up! Cursed shall he be when he goeth out, and cursed when he cometh in! May the Lord not forgive him his sins! May the Lord's anger and wrath rage against this man, and cast upon him all the imprecations that are written in the Book of the Law! May the

Lord wipe out his name from under the Heavens; and may the Lord destroy him and cast him out from all the Tribes of Israel, with all the maledictions that are written in the Book of the Law! But ye who cleave unto the Lord our God, may ye live forever in union!"

The black candles had burned down; the people streamed out of the temple. They were agitated and overwrought. They would have liked to carry out the sentence which the judges had proclaimed with troubled hearts. They were ready for anything; they would gladly have torn him limb from limb.

Baruch was free now and all alone, freer than he had ever wished to be. The ecclesiastical decision did not fill him with either bitterness or irony. He accepted it as a fact which was not pleasant; but it had been inevitable and, for just that reason, it was not so hard to bear. There would now be no community around him to protect or to hinder him. There would be no warmth for him, and perhaps he would never again have friendship or love. No one would want to hold his hand. They would avoid him as they would a leper. But Spinoza determined to develop the strength to lead a life of poverty, loneliness and scorn. It would be a proving ground for him. If he were able to achieve a love of God, then he would also be able to endure the contempt and hatred of the multitude. "All our salvation, all our happiness, rests on our unalterable and eternal love of God, or on God's love of us." Through cold, friendless nights of poverty, he would struggle for this love. His road was so clear and simple; no pleasures blossomed along the wayside; but at the end of the road was

the greatest of all joys: that spiritual love with which God Himself loves. "Thus the road to true happiness which I have pointed out lies far removed from the great thoroughfare, and the ascent seems steep and difficult. And yet one should be capable of finding that path and following it. For verily, that which is so rare must be full of difficulties. If salvation were attained easily and without hardship, not so many would miss the path or decide to retrace their steps so soon. But surrounding the Sublime are ramparts and trenches that do not permit free passage to anyone without a great battle."

The rabbis had brought unreasonable charges against Baruch. However, were not such charges hurled against all the philosophers and heralds of the great religions? Had not the Spanish philosophers also tried to introduce new ideas into the old structure of the Israelites' religion? Had not Maimonides been a pupil of Aristotle? Spinoza decided to write an answer attacking the theologians with theological ideas. His first tract was in Spanish, the "Apologia," the contents of which have been handed down to us by a theologian, Salomo van Til of Utrecht. In this work a new theological hypothesis was presented for the first time. It was the higher criticism of the Bible, a mode of interpretation which was attacked and hated at that time but which is today the foundation of all biblical research. It was the first demonstration that men had altered and transformed Holy Writ, and that the divine repute of the Scriptures had after all also been due to the work of men. After Baruch had written down these thoughts and had completed his manifesto, he laid it aside again. He

had no desire for controversy or even for vindication at that moment; for that would also have meant a conflict.

He desired to live in peace in his home. However, the ban would not permit it. And the power of this ban reached further than might be supposed. Its range must not be measured by physical standards but by its psychological effects. Baruch Spinoza had been cursed in the name of God; it was forbidden to associate with him, to live under the same roof with him, to remain in his presence, or to read any document written by him. These threats affected all those for whom God was the Supreme Judge; hence they also influenced all those belonging to other churches. From then on, Christians, too, regarded Baruch with disdain or, at the least, with distress. Only the sectarians were exceptions in this matter, for they themselves were at war with the rulers of the churches.

Spinoza had perhaps underestimated the power of the ban. He had thought that the old-fashioned curse could only confirm a state of affairs which, in any case, was unalterable. But he had not thought of the ill fame that the people would attach to his name, nor of the danger to his life and activities. He was now living in the house of his teacher, Franciscus van den Enden. When he went out of the house, he was met with insulting looks, invective and a cool distance that people placed between him and themselves. He could also see in their faces a readiness to demonstrate their hatred of him by acts of violence.

One evening he went to a performance of a play written by his teacher. It turned his thoughts cheerfully and pleasantly away from his own destiny. He was not pre-

occupied with the dangers that might be lurking in the poorly lighted streets. His thoughts were still busy with the play. He was suddenly brought back to reality when a face, distorted by an expression of murderous intent, suddenly emerged from the gloom. The street was completely deserted; no one was near. To cry out would have been of no use whatsoever. And anyhow, who would have come to the assistance of a Spinoza? Whatever might happen, he decided not to offer resistance. Already he could see the gleam of a long Spanish dagger; it tore at his shabby coat. Drops of blood oozed up through the rent in his coat. However, the wound was only superficial. The would-be assassin had disappeared. But Baruch had now had his warning.

The struggle against him went on. His enemies felt that their goal had not yet been reached. It was hoped that the ban of the Synagogue would be taken up by the Christian authorities. Was it the pain of disappointed love that instigated Rabbi Morteira to continue persecuting Spinoza? The Rabbi knew that he was in accord with the zealous sentiments of the Calvinist churchmen. He described to them the dangers to Christian doctrine that must result from Spinoza's criticism of the Bible. In the fight against the ever growing heresy of the age and of that country, he urged that all denominations should stand united. The municipal council of the city of Amsterdam could not gainsay these arguments. They took counsel and decided that Spinoza should be banished for a few months, and be forced to remain outside the walls of the town of his birth. They agreed that Rabbi Morteira was right;

they were bound to protect the inhabitants of the city from this infection. This decision was of great importance. For the first time, Church and Synagogue stood together in their war against heresy. And Spinoza was the victim of this union.

Not for long did Rabbi Morteira outlive his victory over his greatest pupil; death ended his struggle. But to his influence could be laid the responsibility for the struggle fought with scholarly weapons against heretics like Spinoza, Prados and other free-thinkers.

Orobio de Castro, the Doctor and philosopher, was entrusted with this task. Rabbi Caceres delivered the eulogy at the services for the teacher and leader, and recalled the thorns and thistles that had grown up in the cornfields of Israel, to the great sorrow of the dead man. The congregation looked upon Caceres as the new and young leader in the war for the security of the faith. But destiny decided otherwise for Spinoza's enemies; in the same year as Morteira, Caceres also died, still a youth, on the threshold of his life and of his struggle for the faith.

Bit by bit, Spinoza's home had been taken away from him. His family had robbed him of his parents' house; the rabbis had driven him out of his community; and the city authorities had banished him from his native town with all its associations and memories. His home had cast him forth as though he had been a criminal or a rebel. But he did not wish to rebel, and he did not desire to attack either the power of the State or that of the Churches. That would not be the right kind of truth, if it

could not prevail of itself. Neither did he wish that his ideas should be associated with his own personality. He was no herald, or prophet, or violent and triumphant leader of an army of new truths. He wished only to serve. His sphere of duty was humble; it was a searching into the rich, unlocked world of eternal truth. Of what importance could his person or his destiny be?

He would go away from this big city, which he did not need, especially now when "the highest good" was ever clearer to him, and when he understood "that pecuniary gain, sensual enjoyment and vainglory were harmful only when desired for themselves and not as a means to an end." He needed quiet and a place where no one knew anything about him, and where there would be neither love nor enmity for him. He had to say farewell only to those in his teacher's home, where his only friends were. With the exception of these, there were few in this city who would give him their hand in farewell.

Where was Baruch to go? It was almost as if his way led not only out of his home but out of life itself. He chose to follow the last road taken by his mother, his father and his sisters and brothers, the road of the dead, out to Ouderkerk, where the cemetery of the Portuguese community lay. In Ouderkerk, he would settle and see which direction his life would take now that he had left his home town. Another presentiment came to him here: that of his own early end. Baruch had always been delicate and sickly, but he had always recovered and had found sufficient strength to pursue his studies. Now he felt that sickness was overwhelming him, filling his being and form-

ing his character. With the maturing of his work, Baruch would also approach his own end. If God would be good to him, He would give him sufficient time to round out his ideas. Then it would be time; then his disease, which was of such a nature that there could be no possible remedy for it, would become his profound destiny. Then his life, to which the world was indifferent, would be expunged. For Spinoza knew no higher ambition than anonymity, the conquest of all personal experiences and events for the benefit of eternity and the common weal.

From Ouderkerk he could see the outskirts of Amsterdam as though he were looking back at his youth. He had been banished. The city had built up a wall of words against this gentle enemy. But how wonderful was this solitude! His sojourn in this place was also better for his health than the swampy air of the canals. Never before had he been able to work with such application. A pile of books and notes accumulated on his desk, and out of them arose an ordered development of his principal ideas. The time of study was becoming a time of creation. Already the groundwork of the system became plain; already the foundation stones were laid for a model structure which would become the basis for future centuries of European philosophy.

In his modest room, Baruch was alone with his thoughts. He made no discoveries; he did not rack his brains for a new interpretation of words or traditions. He only observed the austere, logical conclusions of his meditations as one would observe the movements of an organism under a microscope. Thinking is also seeing; one sees

the universal laws of existence, which become clear only to the sharpest, most untiring eye. No ironic smile came over the boyish, consumptive face as the correctness of these thoughts and, at the same time, the errors of the theologians became more and more evident.

To be sure, Spinoza's idea of God, which was always the pivot of his philosophy, no longer had anything in common with the old idea of Jehovah. And yet his new faith was like that of his ancestors' purest monotheism; and no religious tradition was closer to him than Judaism. The German romanticist, Novalis, said of Spinoza that he was a "God-intoxicated man." "Spinozism," said he, "is an oversaturation with divinity." But Spinoza's contemporaries judged him a religious blasphemer and an atheist. No reproach could have given him more pain: "Is it true that a man has laid aside all religion when he asserts that God must be considered the greatest good and, as such, should be loved with an open mind? And when he also says that the reward of virtue is virtue itself; and that the punishment of folly and impotence is folly itself? And when he says finally, that everyone should love his neighbor and should obey the Commandments of the Almighty? And these things, I not only said, but also proved by the soundest arguments." He had studied the new philosophy of Giordano Bruno and Descartes, and yet their thoughts had not entered the lifestream of his thoughts as had those of the Bible, the Talmud and the Jewish philosophers of the Middle Ages. Never would he enter another Church; nor would he ever become a Christian.

He labored every minute of the day. It was said that

for weeks, indeed, for months, he never left his house. He had to wrestle for every minute he could get from his life, a life that was meted out to him in such weak and paltry measure for his creative work. How much time did he have left? How long would his sick, wasted lungs be able to breathe this sharp, northern air? The solitude which surrounded him by no means meant unlimited freedom for him. His existence also had its laws that had to be obeyed. "A person governed by reason is freer in the State, where he lives according to the commonly accepted regulations, than in solitude, where he has only himself to obey." However, this solitude did leave him his everyday freedom, remote from those disturbing elements which hinder pure reasoning, those elements which originate in human moods and feelings. It also freed him from everything that might have affected his tender and sensitive nature, so easily impressed by every human encounter. His solitude freed him from hate and anger, from envy, and contempt; in short, from everything that prevents men from acting nobly, and from finding joy in life.

Spinoza's existence, from now until his death, was to be that of a quiet architect of thought. He was to create, in deep and imperturbable solitude, to follow, always, the way of clarity, unconcerned with the outside world as he saw it through the narrow frame of his small window. He would be untouched by the hateful words and calumnies which assailed him from many sides. Since the time of the sages of ancient India and the monks of the Middle Ages, no work had ever been completed in such an ascetic atmosphere. Every pleasure, every outer manifestation of the

joy of life: a free breath of summer's balmy air, an aimless stroll through the broad Dutch meadows—all of these were forbidden to the youth. And yet his asceticism was neither bitter, gloomy nor joyless. On the contrary, it was full of bright cheer and human kindness. Word has come down to us of his cheerful and animated conversation. These impressions lingered in the memory of all those who came in contact with him. "Your sound erudition combined with amiability, kindness and exquisite manners (merits with which Nature and your own efforts have endowed you in the highest degree) have something about them so attractive that they create an attachment for you in all people of noble character and good education." Such was Henry Oldenburg's impression after his first meeting with Spinoza. And if Spinoza ever did express a low-voiced, ironical comment about some incorrigible opponent, it only emphasized his usual innate kindliness.

He lived in Ouderkerk only for a short time. Toward the end of 1660, he moved to Rhynsburg, a village one mile away from Leyden. Here he lived in obscurity on a little side street which now bears his name. An odd contrast to the deep, world-stirring wisdom that was born in this house is to be found on one of its gables: a simple, modest admonition from Kamphuyzen's "Morning Hour in May."

Could everyone be kind and wise,
Could thoughts on goodness dwell,
Then earth would be a Paradise
Instead of being a Hell.

Rhynsburg seemed to have been created by Nature for quiet and repose. The peace that reigned over its little brick houses and over its canals and fields was perfect for a contemplative life. It was not the peace of death, as at Ouderkerk. This village had become the principal meeting place of one of the most important sects of the century. It was the home of the Collegiants, who were also called the Rhynsburgers. This sect swore allegiance to a mystical form of Christianity, and sought God within themselves instead of beyond the world.

In Amsterdam they were obliged to meet in secret. But in Rhynsburg, they lived as in a fortress. Here they were the masters, and no one dared to touch them. At their reunions they read the Bible and commented upon it, very much as the Jews did in their study sessions. They were deeply religious by nature. However, they did not express it through any religious rites, but demonstrated it rather by their daily habits of life and by their views.

But in the eyes of the Church and its ministers, the Collegiants were dangerous heretics who had to be fought and uprooted. Yet they could not be charged with any aggressive intent against the state Church. They were not rebels, and their philosophy culminated in the ideals of peace and justice. But they did not wish to join the Calvinist Church. They shunned its services, and declared that the Church had deserted the apostolic simplicity which had been its original advantage over Catholicism.

In their humble manner as well as in their free and undogmatic interpretation of their conception of God, there certainly existed a relationship between the Col-

legiants and the philosophy of Spinoza. Already he had found friendship in their circles in Amsterdam; in Rhynsburg they welcomed him with confidence and esteem. For them, Spinoza also represented the great expert on Holy Writ and the critical interpreter of the Hebrew and Latin texts. His personal philosophy they could not understand; it was strange to them, as was all theoretical philosophy. All in all, they were simple folk who, in some way, sensed the approach of a new and gifted spirit, but who could only comprehend his thoughts within the narrow bounds of religious doctrines of salvation. The spirit of early Rationalism passed close to them and stirred their minds, although they were unable to recognize its historical implications.

It was especially the philosophy of Descartes that imperceptibly and unacknowledged struck root. There were people whom the new philosophy had reached indirectly and without their active consciousness, and who now turned against the antiquated views and the laws of the Church. The rationalistic spirit also clearly and sharply illumined the dark spots in social life. This spirit demanded truth and reason, in thought as well as in life. Whatever was untrue and unreasonable, and contradicted the new interpretation of man's existence, had to be put aside. A silent revolution took place which was feared by all those against whom it was directed.

No one desired an open, violent revolt against the Church or the State. But the power of reason had been acknowledged. A physician of Dordrecht, Daniel Jonkjys, demonstrated so well the folly and horror of the rack,

and thereby aroused public opinion to such an extent, that this terrible instrument of medieval ignorance finally disappeared. By way of Cartesianism, the knowledge of the new, natural science also came to the fore, in spite of all the opposition of the Church. Here, too, the Collegiants and the other sectarians were willing assistants. Thus, Lambert van Velthuysen, denounced as a free-thinker, became a pioneer of the Copernican system, as part of the war against church dogma. The spirit of the Baroque period meant the broadening of all fields of thinking and living, and at the same time, it expressed the great desire for the unification of spiritual life. The dogma of Scholasticism had been overcome, even if not all its precepts had been rejected. The Renaissance had acknowledged Nature as a new vital force, as a colorful world of the here and now, to which each individual belonged. There was a desire to classify this new realm of knowledge, experience and discovery, and to bring systematic order into the richness of the universe that was now being revealed. The goals toward which the various forces were tending were mysticism and rationalism, art and thought, a new experience and reshaping of the world, and the merging of isolation with sociality. The many facets of this general effort toward the unification of human culture provide us with a clue for understanding the real meaning of the northern Baroque.

Spinoza, too, belonged to this era, and not merely to the outer form and content of its philosophy. He, too, was impressed by the new art of the epoch. In fact, he even tried to express himself in painting, drawing portraits of

his friends and a sketch of himself in the garb of Masaniello, the Neapolitan hero in the struggle for freedom.

The more the spirit of Enlightenment spread and invaded everyday life, the more secure the different sectarians felt in their philosophy of life. This was particularly true of the Collegiants in their fortress in Rhynsburg. The light of a new wisdom bound them together as if they were a rebel army. A few years before Spinoza came to Rhynsburg, a simple baker named Franz Joachim Oudan, had dared to deride the Rotterdam court of justice when it had asked him for an explanation of his having given asylum to fugitive remonstrant preachers. Oudan sent a cat to the tribunal in answer to its summons. It was a defiance characteristic of that Rhynsburg spirit, into the midst of which Spinoza now entered.

He often smiled at their provincial outlook, but he knew and understood these people, who treated him with respect. He esteemed their courageous sincerity. Quietly and peacefully he lived among them, hardly different from them in his way of life, which was even poorer and simpler than theirs. In matters of food he was more frugal than was good for his sickly body. His meals for the most part consisted of milk porridge and groats. His clothing also was very simple. But Spinoza refused all gifts and favors. When a distinguished visitor once asked him to accept a new coat as a present, the philosopher merely replied, "Would I then become a different man? It is a bad thing when a sack is better than what it contains."

He liked his solitude, but the knowledge which he had acquired needed the confirmation of others. It must not,

either now or ever, be confined to his name alone, but it must be circulated in a living movement; it must make its way from man to man; it must work on, produce new knowledge and continue to reaffirm its truth. Spinoza understood that the happiness and blessings of solitude had their limits. Solitude prompted him to complete his work, unconcerned with the outside world. But his work itself clamored for a real world into which it could flow, and in which it would be able to prove its truth. It was not Spinoza's way nor his intention to propagate his wisdom, but it had to be imparted to others, or all his efforts would have been in vain. He desired to avoid general notoriety, and so he did, all his life. But he needed a limited public, not as a requirement for his personal existence, but as a necessity for his doctrines.

Thus there arose in him a desire to engage in an exchange of ideas. The desire was realized in his correspondence. Spinoza's letters are not only human documents of incomparable significance, but they also constitute an important contribution to the history of philosophy. Goethe considered them the most interesting documents in the world for their sincerity and humanity.

In these letters, the walls of his cloistered life were breached, and Spinoza came into contact with the exciting thoughts and deeds of his time. Thus he freed himself from the law of his existence and found his way into community with others. He held written discourse with other people, in the one and only way that corresponded to his character. "One wins men's hearts not by arms but by love and magnanimity."

On account of his free-thinking, the world had ostracized him. He was not interested in winning it back again or even in convincing it of its error. But he needed a small audience of men of good will, who would listen to him; because thought proceeds through words, and words require that they be heard.

The Jew of Voorburg finished his small lenses by tool. The results were quite remarkable.
—CHRISTIAN HUYGENS

CHAPTER FIVE

The Lens Grinder

I

SPINOZA had desired poverty; he had calmly abandoned his inheritance and had never thought of gain or material benefit. But even the most modest existence requires some pecuniary source for its maintenance. Where could Spinoza find such a source?

With empty hands he had gone into exile, equipped with nothing but his good will and a firm belief in the blessings of truth. To be sure, he had found a few friends in the home of Doctor Franciscus, friends who might have aided him. He had earned some money by giving lessons while in the teacher's home, but the money had long since been spent. Should he now accept alms? That would give him a feeling of poverty for the first time, a feeling of social pressure and dependence which he could not stand. No, he would earn his daily bread himself, within those modest limits prescribed for him by his character. He did not wish to own a cent more than he actually required. And he required less than many who are actually in want.

He was a young scholar. The fame of his erudition had

already been great in the "Tree of Life," and since then, it had become even greater. The Collegiants looked upon him as one of the greatest theologians of the era. It would therefore have been easy for Baruch to earn money by teaching. He could have given private lessons again. In Rhynsburg, however, he could find very few pupils. But the University city of Leyden was quite near, and there his name was already very well known. There were sure to be students in Leyden who would gladly study with him. But Baruch was obliged to reject this plan. His scholarly work was still in the making; he was still seeking after the unknown, and he had to be alone with his ideas. He could communicate these ideas to his friends only after he had become quite sure of them and had discovered their authentic form. But to teach a philosophy different from his own would not have been logical at this time and would only have led him away from his own path.

In the struggle for his daily bread, Baruch wanted to be one among many, a worker among workers, an insignificant cog in the great machine of the toiling multitude. He would seek some handicraft that would bring him just enough for his needs. That was all that mattered now. In all matters of external existence he felt himself at one with those who spent their lives in workshops and in counting houses. But his higher being belonged to thoughts that obeyed no practical purpose. These thoughts should bring him no other gain than truth and the love of God. They must be kept free from any impulsion forced upon him by the necessities of life.

Perhaps Baruch also knew the old Talmudic precept

which demanded of the scholar that he serve an apprenticeship in some handicraft as a religious duty. Had it not been said in an old tract that "The study of the law is beautiful when it is combined with a trade, because the effort needed for both keeps the scholar from sinning; and all study which is not combined with some handicraft, in the end comes to naught and brings injustice in its wake." Or again: "He who earns his living by toil is greater than he who fears God." Many of the great Jewish sages had practiced a handicraft. They had been wood-choppers, blacksmiths, shoemakers, stone cutters, and potters, and had also served their God in this humble manner. Thus Baruch decided to learn how to grind optical lenses, especially as they were in great demand by astronomers for their telescopes and by biologists for their microscopes. With this handicraft Spinoza also remained associated with the scholarly tendencies of his time. Descartes, by his study of optics, had directed many young students into this activity. Johannes Hudde, a few years younger than Spinoza, and a physician, scientist and mathematician of great ability, also busied himself with the grinding of magnifying lenses. And an even greater scientist showed an astonished world how enormous was the advantage of using optical lenses in scientific research. It was Christian Huygens, who a few years before, with the help of his telescope, had discovered the largest satellite of Saturn, and had opened up new paths to astronomy. By his discovery of the pendulum clock, he became renowned throughout the entire world. At about the same time the Dutch microscopist Leeuwenhoek discovered that lenses of very

short focus would improve the ordinary compound microscope. This discovery enabled him many years later to give the first accurate description of the red blood corpuscles. Spinoza knew about these men. He did not follow their example because of personal ambition, but only to accomplish fruitful, humble work which would also remain anonymous.

But this handicraft was strenuous, and it proved ruinous to Spinoza's health. Like a deadly poison, the glass dust penetrated into his diseased lungs. The tiresome, life-destroying work would have been meaningless if it had served only for the support of his daily needs. There must have been easier ways for Baruch, whom the Christians called Benedictus, to protect himself from starvation. But he liked his handiwork, the precise grinding of his lenses, the exactness of the mathematical calculations involved and the broader outlook that the work of his hands would provide for many people. His imagination conjured up the world of the stars and the extremely minute animate life that his lenses, when fitted into optical instruments, would make visible to all. Thus the rationalism of his mind was joined to the dream of a child. Spinoza remained true to his own character even in his handicraft, for it also served clarity and truth, just as his philosophy, too, was to serve for clearer and wider vision. This handiwork also protected him from the dangerous one-sidedness of pure thought. In many ways, the lonesome lens grinder was now united with the people of the world. He created articles that were needed in the great markets of life and, at the same time, served scientific

progress in a very quiet, anonymous and impersonal way. Thus, he happily observed the industrious work of his hands; and this made him even more incomprehensible to people than ever before.

Plying his trade, he lived smilingly like a saint in his cell. The picture of the philosophizing lens grinder and his poor humble way of life greatly impressed his contemporaries. Balthasar Bekker reported the following in his book, "The Enchanted World," published in 1691: "In that which concerns his way of life, I heard good reports from those who knew him; and in personal intercourse with him, I found no lack of morality or of exemplary conduct. He supported himself by his work of making all kinds of lenses for optical use, according to mathematical formulae; and he spent his life in peace and in celibacy."

During this loneliest time of his life, Spinoza wrote his first treatise. It followed the laws by which he now governed himself. The work originated in his desire to begin the construction of his philosophical system; but it also resulted, like his letters, from his desire to place the results of his researches into the hands of those few friends who stood close to him in their thoughts. Hence, his ideas were written for only a few people; namely, for those to whose spirit his ideas and, above all, the new philosophy were comprehensible. That was also the reason for his friends' intention of having his work translated from Latin into Dutch, and having it distributed in a few handwritten copies; "in order that those who boast so much and press their filthy rubbish into the hands of the

stupid as though it were precious amber, would have their mouths closed once and for all, and thus would stop reviling that which they do not understand."

This essay was the "Short Treatise." It dated from the time of his apprenticeship, before he had reached his maturity. This outline of a new world picture was developed out of the confusion of the century and out of the powerful emotions of his youth. But it was already clear and precise in form. This system had grown out of unrest and anxiety. Nourished by the mystical and ancient force of Jewish tradition and by the philosophy of Descartes, it was nevertheless a product of an entirely personal mode of thinking. The restrained form of his ideas showed control and balance in contrast to their inner unrest. Only thus is life bearable, and only thus is creation possible. Cartesianism and the philosophy of men like Ibn Esra, Maimonides, Gersonides, and Chasdai Crescas characterize the era and the origins of the young thinker. However, it would not be true to say that Baruch's philosophy was merely the continuation of their thoughts. Spinoza was led into their world by nature and history.

With glass dust on his clothes, at a table covered with instruments and lenses, in a stillness interrupted only by the painful coughing caused by his diseased lungs, Spinoza wrote his "Short Treatise" between 1656 and 1660, in Rhynsburg. The fate of this manuscript, the original of which was lost, is rather odd. The Dutch copies that we possess were written only after Spinoza's death, and were not discovered and published until the nineteenth century.

In Dutch, the manuscript was called "Korte Verhandeling." In the English translation, it bears the title, "Short Treatise on God, Man, and his Well-Being."

The aim and intent of this treatise demand that we disregard the author in favor of his philosophical doctrine. And yet, his personality quietly forces itself through, showing itself in the uncertainty of form and in the suppressed emotion that accompanies the logical deductions. The whole work lacks finish and structure. It is a kind of philosophical shorthand report, an invitation to discussion rather than a completed work. Dialogues suddenly appear in the middle of logical demonstrations, like foreign bodies from other hours and other spheres of thought. And yet, this first production is more than a work of seeking or groping. It already shows the author's ability in methodical thinking. In spite of its contradictions and its many gaps of thought, the system, in most of its parts, is already shaped. Above all, its single goal emerges clearly and brightly.

This goal was, as then and always, the knowledge of God and of the truth. In the first chapter the manuscript attempts to adduce the proof "that God is." For this idea was to Spinoza the reason and goal of all philosophy. In spite of all, however, his reputation of being an atheist still clung to him; indeed, it was identified even more with the name of the poor lens grinder. "With considerable but devilish skill, he establishes atheism," raged Regner van Mansvelt, professor of philosophy in Utrecht. How many centuries, tragedies and errors had to pass, before the time came when Ernest Renan could cry out in front of

the house in the Hague where Spinoza had died, "It is here, perhaps, that God was seen at closer range." How slowly the world came to understand that God could be sought elsewhere than in theology or churches. Spinoza's philosophy of religion was, to be sure, always one of radical rationalism, since it maintained that only the mathematically calculating intellect can have the power of knowledge. And yet, this rationalism had a core of mysticism and magic in its great longing for space and infinity. The ambiguous Pantheism of the Renaissance now acquired a rigid, austere form. But this only concealed its mystic heritage which continued to glow in its innermost soul.

In the "Short Treatise" the pantheistic idea not only bound God and the universe together, but it lent to this union a metaphysical character. The demonstration that God "is," implied the question, "What is God?" According to the pattern of the ontological proof of God, and according to the psychological method of Descartes, God was demonstrated to be the first cause of all things and also the cause of Himself. He was no longer an anthropomorphic Being, no longer the good Father of all living creatures, no longer the King of Men who dwelt beyond the world of men. He was a Being endowed with limitless and countless attributes, a Being in whose infinite intelligence there was no other substance than that in Nature. The paths leading to this amalgamation of God with Nature are not quite clear or demonstrated. But the twofold goal of the acknowledgment of God is very clear; that is, through faith and knowledge, in the sense of

Jewish monotheism, and through rational thinking. "Nature is understood by itself and not by anything else. It consists of endless attributes, of which each one is infinite and perfect. Nature, therefore, is related to existence in such a manner that without it there is no being or existing; and hence it conforms to the essence of that unique, glorious and blessed God."

From this time on, there is a complete change in metaphysical thinking, a change born of the yearnings of Pantheism and leading to a vast new knowledge of the world. Pantheism in itself was not an answer to the ancient questions of metaphysics but only a desire for simplification. To be sure, the unification of God and Nature gave the idea of God a new meaning; but the question regarding the true essence of Nature and, above all, the question of the relationship between body and soul became all the more urgent. In this work Spinoza acquired an entirely new insight, the great importance of which he himself in all probability did not suspect. Since God is the one great unity, soul and body are His attributes. Their antithesis is accommodated by the unity of the Substance to which they belong. There is only this one Substance, which exists of itself and to which all other attributes belong; so that infinite extension and eternal thought "are nothing else but modes of the one, eternal, never-ending essence, existing by its own innate power."

A second concept of essential and lasting significance is that of the dual character of Nature in conformance with the idea of unity. As God-nature, it is *natura naturans,* the infinite and creative eternal principle. From the

viewpoint of our observations and experiences, however, it is *natura naturata,* the created, finite nature of things, the world of creatures, created by God and dependent on Him.

This concretization of pantheistic yearning and this new conception of the essence of Nature, are the very core of Spinoza's metaphysics. It is a spiritual model of existence, filled with the religious desire for unity. However, this model still showed gaps and ragged edges; as yet it was not fully rounded. But this metaphysical idea was only an introductory note to Spinoza's philosophy. It was an image of super-reality which still had to be reflected in the image of actual human reality. The question of the essence of God implied, as a consequence, the question of the essence of man. Even though man was the creation of God, only man could ask the question about His universal unity, just as the arch of Heaven can only be seen from the earth.

An atheological conception of God can only correspond to a conception of man if it is entirely freed from theological ethics. A God Who is Nature, and Whose properties are soul and body, cannot conceive of good and evil in the form of things or actions, for good and evil are not to be found in Nature. Valuations such as these are only possible in relation to our ideas of them, but not in relation to God or Nature.

This ethical liberation is only alluded to in the "Short Treatise." Just as the critical refusal to believe in the moral benefit of pangs of conscience and remorse, it represents an unsuspected, revolutionary denial of all church

doctrines. On the whole, Spinoza's Ethics indicated a radical withdrawal from the theological idea of morals. Ethics was, for him, love for God, born from a knowledge and conception of Him. We are so bound to God that without Him we can neither understand nor be understood. Through Nature and love, we are at one with Him. "For, as the whole of Nature is of only one substance whose being is infinite, so all things are united by Nature, and are indeed one, namely, united in God." From this oneness it is also evident that God cannot, as the theologians think, reward or punish. The laws of God are those of Nature, and cannot, therefore, be trespassed upon; only the laws governing the interests of the petty world of men, but not those of the manifold aspects of Nature, can be trespassed upon. We belittle God when we make a man-God of Him and change the laws of great, everlasting, delightful Nature into those governing our human affairs.

The question arises as to why Spinoza called this universal unity "God," since it corresponded so little to the theological conception. The answer, no doubt, is that he called it God because of his piety, because of the living tradition of the Jewish idea of oneness, and because of his deep, humble, pious conception of the spirit of all existence. This belief in God dominated every line of his tract, which appeared to be dry in its presentation, but was actually deeply saturated with inner religious passion. Its inadequacy of form and its profusion of contradictions and obscurities are to be excused by the purpose of this treatise which was only meant as a motivation and basis for discussion among his friends. Its publication was impossible

because the law of the State demanded a distinct separation between theology and philosophy. In the year 1656, the Dutch Parliament decided that "those subjects and questions which appertain to theology and were established only by Revelation of God's sacred Word, as well as the final distinction of such questions, which from Nature through intelligence must and should be examined and known, should be left to the theologians alone." And in like manner, it was also decided for the philosophers that "as a definite rule everything which has been revealed to man by God our Lord by means of Holy Writ, must be considered as immutable and incontestable."

This law was known to Spinoza. He could not agree with it, for it would have denied him the freedom he required. But he also knew that this law had its roots in the religious zeal and needs of the era. However, truth finds its way in spite of every law. Nevertheless, one had to pay heed to the law because the State had created it in order to preserve peace in the land. That was the reason for his warning to his friends to be cautious about propagating his new ideas. That was probably also the reason for the word, "Caute," inscribed on his seal.

He warned his friends thus: "Now, in conclusion, there only remains this: for me to tell you, my friends for whom this has been written, that you should not be surprised by these new ideas, for you know very well that a thing does not cease being true just because it is not accepted by the multitude. And as the character of the century in which we live is not unknown to you, I would beg of you most earnestly to be very careful about com-

municating these matters to others. I do not say that you should keep them entirely to yourselves, but only that, if ever you should wish to communicate them to any one, you should allow no other aims to prompt you than the happiness of your neighbor; and in this, you can be assured that you will not be defrauded of the reward for your effort. If finally, in reading through this work, difficulties should arise for you in what I have established, I beg of you not to refute them immediately, before having thought them over for some time with balanced consideration. If you will do this, I feel assured you will arrive at that enjoyment of the fruit of this tree which you have promised yourselves."

II

The "Short Treatise" and Spinoza's letters were directed toward the same readers, toward that little group of men who possessed sufficient understanding to rise to a comprehension of the new philosophy and of Spinoza's personality. The air they breathed was that of the northern Renaissance and of the Reformation. It was also the air of a new bourgeois society, eminent in the fine arts, restless and ready to battle for religion, ruled in its studies by the spirit of rationalism and by the new natural science. It was the classic era of the Netherlands, whose outstanding figures were Rembrandt, Spinoza and Jan de Witt.

Spinoza's powerful influence on his friends did not originate in any intentional plan. He did not care to build up a following, nor to found a school; nor did his future

truth, indeed eager for it, yet you suffer yourself to be led astray and deceived by the wretched and most arrogant Prince of evil Spirits. All your philosophy, what is it but a mere illusion and a chimera?" Only with difficulty could Spinoza endure this darkening of the intelligence. Only with difficulty could he control his anger and smile. "And you pity me? Poor man! And my philosophy that you have never seen, you call a chimera? Oh you God-forsaken youth! Who blinded you so, that you believe you can swallow the highest eternal Being, and hold him in your entrails?" Another one who left Spinoza's followers was Willem van Blyenbergh, by profession a grain dealer, but filled with theological aspirations. He, too, after the appearance of the "Theological-Political Treatise," turned away from Spinoza, and sent him spiteful pamphlets in answer to this work as well as to the "Ethics."

But the others retained their amazement and admiration, remaining bound to the spiritual world of the young philosopher. This circle of friends, devoted to their master's wealth of ideas and disturbed by the unrest of their age, presented an excellent picture of that century in the Netherlands through their correspondence, in which the important events are continually mentioned. But there was no more convincing and better interpretation of Spinoza's philosophy, nor a clearer or more persuasive picture of his character, than that which Spinoza gave to his friends himself. No medium can bring him so close to us in person as the accounts of those who met him.

All of them: Oldenburg, De Vries, Burgh, Meyer, Balling, Blyenbergh, Hudde, Tschirnhaus, Schuller and

Leibnitz, were impressed by their meeting with this man who, in his thought and in his way of life, followed a path of consistent, rigorous logic to the very end. Their kinship was based on the fact of having known him, of having been sharers in his thoughts and partners in his dialogues. They were as in a miniature State, in the center of which he stood, always working, always poor, always ready to help, and never in the guise of master. In their social positions and opinions, Spinoza's friends were very unlike; they were alike only in their denial of tradition and authority in intellectual life, and in the middle-class character of their way of existence. The simplicity of their appearance and their position in everyday life, hardly seemed to harmonize with the spiritual revolution in which they were engaged. The revolution had occurred under the aegis of Descartes, but it went far beyond him; for Descartes, either on account of his Catholic ties or because of the timidity of his character, never dared to trespass beyond theological bounds. The martyrdom of Giordano Bruno and Galileo Galilei are written on another page of contemporary history.

The example of these two men, however, also influenced the state of mind of this circle. The Church was no longer an untouchable dogmatic reality. Christianity was, as ever, an unrealizable mission, and every faith was obliged to hold its own under the sharp light of research. The dullness and ignorance of the sectarians among his friends was slightly improved under Spinoza's leadership. But his friends could not always follow him. Often they were caught in a compromise between the old and the new.

Thus, Blyenbergh introduced himself to Spinoza, asking for answers with which he could be satisfied. He referred to himself as "one who, in his search for truth, sets before himself no other object than truth itself; one who seeks to obtain for himself through science neither honors nor riches, but truth alone, and peace of mind as a result of truth. . . ."

They all felt the spiritual emergency of the age, in spite of the fact that, for the most part, they had come from practical occupations and were without much education. In spiritual rank and human qualities, Henry Oldenburg far surpassed them all.

This man's friendship was an important turning point in Spinoza's life; for it was a modern scholar who entered his life. He came from the great world of officialdom, having played a role in international affairs. Into this modest Rhynsburg hermitage he came, and became Spinoza's friend. Oldenburg was neither a leading nor a creative spirit, but during his sojourn in many different lands he had acquired standards about which small, sectarian Holland knew nothing. When he applied these standards to Spinoza, he discovered in astonishment the greatness of a mind and character which the era did not possess elsewhere. "As to the gifts of mind which you possess, allow me to claim a share of them, since this can be done without detriment to you." He acknowledged his impressions at once, and begged in humble modesty for the friendship of the younger man.

At the time that their meeting took place, Spinoza was twenty-nine years old and Oldenburg was in his early

forties. He had a remarkable, vagrant life behind him that had led him out of his native German town of Bremen into England, out of the study of theology into a position as a tutor; and after extensive travel, he had finally been sent on diplomatic missions. Domestic trade had suffered greatly as a result of the war between England and Holland. The Senate of the City of Bremen wished to acquire the status of neutrality for the city's ships. Who could negotiate the matter in London? They hit upon Oldenburg, and on the 30th of June, 1653, gave him the mandate of heading a mission to London. Although the mission was unsuccessful, it had in any event become superfluous through the signing of a peace between England and Holland. However, his diplomatic talents had been demonstrated. The home republic remembered this when relations between Bremen and Sweden became entangled. Oldenburg obtained the mediation of Cromwell, and thereby secured peace for his country. Thus he entered into international politics at an early age, and also, what was more important, took part in the intellectual life of London. There he became acquainted with Puritanism and with the personality of Cromwell. He became the friend of Milton and of the great theologian, John Durie. He also came to know Thomas Hobbes. As tutor of a young Scottish nobleman, he became acquainted with English aristocratic society, as hardly any other foreigner of those days had ever done. New meetings followed, most important being that with Robert Boyle, the great and versatile scientist. Boyle's nephew, Richard Jones, became Oldenburg's pupil, and they traveled through France and Ger-

many. Above all, they followed in the wake of the new scientific research which Oldenburg zealously reported to Boyle. While they were out of England, the country was menaced by the counter-revolution. In 1661, after having visited his native town of Bremen, he went to Leyden to meet his friend Coccejus, who was Professor of theology there. From Leyden he proceeded to neighboring Rhynsburg where he engaged in lengthy discussions with Spinoza. Spinoza was now also informed of the great world. For the first time, he looked out beyond the frontiers of the Netherlands. He saw how the confusion of the century bound the leaders of the new studies, sciences and discoveries into a close brotherhood. In England, a society had been formed for the study of natural science, and Oldenburg was chosen as its secretary. The Dutchmen also admired the learned work of this new association which, on the 15th of July, 1662, took the name of "The Royal Society." Christian Huygens sailed over to London and wrote to his brother, "The members of this new Natural Science Society in Gresham College allowed me to observe a large number of interesting experiments concerning the vacuum. . . . At the request of the gentlemen, I had the lenses of my large telescope brought, which, in comparative experiments, proved better than theirs. They were very thankful to me for having disclosed to them the secret of grinding them."

Spinoza also knew this secret. In the humble room, where he conversed with Oldenburg, there were lenses and instruments lying around. Fine glass dust whirled about the walls. Oldenburg had heard much of the young

Jewish philosopher and of his fate. After having made the acquaintance of all the great minds in his time, his curiosity had been aroused, and the desire arose in him to know this quiet, solitary man, who defied curses and poverty in order to think the most audacious thoughts of the age.

Originally Oldenburg had not been interested in philosophy. His scholarly path had led from theology to natural science, but he knew that all knowledge finally ended in philosophy, whence it had originally come.

Thus, he entered Spinoza's poor dwelling and into trains of thought whose radicalism must have frightened him. But the personality of the young thinker gripped and staggered him as no other had ever been able to do before. Both understood each other because of their frank and natural manner, and because of their mutual interest in natural science. The older man acquired philosophical illumination from the younger one, such as he had never before experienced. This man was greater in mind and in destiny than all the other men of his time, Oldenburg acknowledged. He realized that this friendship would put him under obligation to Spinoza for the rest of his life.

This conversation of July, 1661, and the subsequent exchange of letters with Spinoza, aroused a veritable whirl of questions in Oldenburg's mind, questions which held him fast with panther-like claws. A blossoming of empirical knowledge was taking place before his eyes. Nature was yielding up her deepest secrets, her most precious laws. Oldenburg was closer to this assiduous work of research than almost anyone else. The Royal Society was

now, in reality, an academy of European natural science. He came into close association with Newton who, on account of his discovery of the reflecting telescope, had been voted a member of the Society. Until his death, Oldenburg was also the editor of the Society's publication, "Philosophical Transactions." Thus he was the modest but powerful leader in the realm of the new natural sciences. He was drawn into the learned controversy among the members of this Academy; as for example, the passionate contest between Newton and Robert Hook, "Curator of Experiments" of the Royal Society. With Leibnitz he carried on a lively correspondence concerning physical and mathematical questions; and, in 1674, Leibnitz sent to Oldenburg his renowned series of articles on the area of the circle, which the latter published in his "Philosophical Collections." Through the influence of Spinoza, however, his views were directed from isolated truths and isolated observations to the ultimate questions of thought. Oldenburg now understood that every successful experiment and every correct calculation stood in relationship to metaphysical questions on which the destiny of all knowledge depends. These questions concerning the essence of God, thought, extension, and the essence of the body and of the soul, as well as those concerning the teachings of Bacon and Descartes—all rushed passionately at him through these discussions by correspondence. What he was now learning was more than a new science; he was learning to observe philosophically.

High aims were also pursued by the circle of "The Royal Society." Proudly, Oldenburg declared: "In our

Philosophical Society we engage, as far as our powers allow, in diligently making experiments and observations; and we spend much time in preparing a History of the Mechanical Arts, feeling certain that the forms and qualities of things can best be explained by the principles of Mechanics, and that all the effects of Nature are produced by motion, form, texture and the varying combinations of these, and that there is no need to have recourse to inexplicable forms and occult qualities as a refuge for ignorance." How happy this statement sounds! It is as if the older scholar wished to announce to his young master that, in a foreign city and in a circle of earnest experts, the mission of pure thought to which Spinoza had dedicated his life, had been recognized. How happy it made Oldenburg to be able to serve the young thinker, to transmit scientific information to him, to acquaint him with the writings and the personality of Robert Boyle, and repeatedly, to show him his gratitude and respect. Like a small, silent gift, he laid his knowledge into Spinoza's hands. In return, he desired greater instruction and illumination, a knowledge of the reason for all things, and guidance through the chaos of the world.

The further Oldenburg penetrated into Spinoza's philosophy, the greater became his wish that these teachings should flow out into the world regardless of the prejudices and dangers which might confront this new philosophy. The former theologian derided the "pack of theologians," who would surely pour out their venom at the new philosophy. And he urged Spinoza not to forget that he lived in the freest state in Europe. "However, your own prudence

will suggest to you that you should express your ideas and your opinions with as much moderation as possible; for the rest, leave the issue to Fate. Come then, excellent Sir, and banish all fear of stirring up the pygmies of our time. Long enough have sacrifices been made to ignorance and absurdity. Let us spread the sails of true knowledge, and venture more deeply into the innermost parts of Nature than has been done hitherto."

No one had ever spoken like this to Spinoza before. He had entered into his poor, hermit-like existence accompanied by curses and hatred, by scorn and pity. He had wished to keep faith with his thoughts, and to complete the edifice of his philosophy. He had never considered these thoughts as capable of causing a conflagration that would work toward the kindling of new spiritual passions. The philosophical spirit—how would it spread from his Rhynsburg chamber into the whole world? This question would not have occurred to Spinoza; it would only have made him smile; it would have been too strange to him. Now, however, an older man, holding high honors and with an important reputation in the official world of science, had come to this young man who, in the eyes of the multitude, was damned and an apostate, and had said, "I will not let you go, honored friend, until I have persuaded you; and as far as it is within my power, I will never be content to let your thoughts, which are so profound, be suppressed by eternal silence."

But to Spinoza, silence was easier than speech. Oldenburg's admiration moved him, but it did not make him proud; nor did it deceive him in his belief in truth, which

is impersonal and goes its own way independent of its accidental discoverer and proclaimer. Almost against his will, however, he found that his own person had become identified with his philosophy in the circle of his friends. And when one of them, an Amsterdam physician, Johannes Bouwmeester, addressed Spinoza with the words, "Love me, for I love you with all my heart," then he had to admit that he was now no longer alone.

Thus he stood within the great edifice of his thoughts and in the company of his friends. He had found the spiritual form which the confused longing of his era had so long sought for in vain, and had constructed the foundation of a new way of thinking, and also of a new way of living. But in his character he had remained unchanged. He was still the same humble servant of truth, asking nothing of the world, and desiring that the world should ask nothing of him. He was bound to the outside world more by letters than by personal conversation. Even Oldenburg never visited him again. Perhaps it was significant of this one important conversation, that it was never repeated.

Even Oldenburg could not encompass the entire audacity and greatness of Spinoza's thoughts. In spite of all his disdain for professional theologians he was not entirely free from theological restraints. He stood in the midst of life, and was acquainted with society of the highest rank. He had had richer personal experiences than young Spinoza, for whom pure thought was the noblest life in the world. For Oldenburg, however, life also had other aspects. He was forced into experiences which necessitated

other requirements than those of truth. He lived through the time of the great pestilence, witnessing the terrible course of this epidemic which finally robbed him of his wife, leaving him alone with his two little children. He experienced the great fire of London in 1666. And he knew at first hand the contaminated, malicious atmosphere of political defamation which now fixed itself on all men in public life. In 1667, Oldenburg was arrested and thrown into the Tower. There was no ground for his arrest, but he was suspect because he was in relationship with foreign countries, carried on secret correspondence and, finally, was himself a foreigner. Oldenburg spent two dreadful months in prison. When he returned to the light again, he had become an old man, and had changed in all his relationships toward the world.

This change also affected his relationship to Spinoza and the new philosophy. Life had laid hold of him from another side than that of thought, and had almost annihilated him. Through terrible experience his fate had become quite unique and personal. The call for help that a man cries out after such experiences is no longer a desire for knowledge and learning, but rather that old religious desire as expressed in the words of the Bible, "In my distress I cried out to the Lord."

Out of his geometrical way of thinking, Spinoza had built up a bold and logical system in which every problem found its clear definition. A man, however, whom life had plunged into despair, could find no answer here. The impersonal truth, the "majesty of reason," did not answer questions that rose out of the deepest and bitterest per-

sonal experience. Thus the estrangement of the aging man from his youthful master began. The final parting of the ways was postponed for a short while. Oldenburg invoked the teachings of the Gospel and appealed to Spinoza's conscience not to take the story of Christ allegorically but literally. "This transformation of everything so as to give it an allegorical meaning is just as though one wished to undermine the whole evangelical story." This well-meant warning really signified that Oldenburg no longer had anything in common with Spinoza's philosophy. Through external accident and inward necessity, the correspondence between these two men was suddenly broken off. Oldenburg outlived Spinoza by only one year.

Among the scholars with whom Spinoza corresponded, Oldenburg was certainly not the most important; but he was the closest to Spinoza. Leibnitz was a genius, but in the unreliability of his character and in his diplomatic suavity, he was infinitely far removed from Spinoza. Are friendships between men, seeking and exploring for the truth, dependent only on spiritual greatness? Spinoza was quite sure of his goal; and the others were equally sure of the greatness of his character. That should have been sufficient for creating and maintaining a spiritual community, in which, after all, only one man could be the leader and the center.

The important thing to Spinoza was to express his thoughts more and more explicitly, to make them ever clearer to his listeners and to spread them upon the stream of living humanity. He decided against discussion and intellectual controversy with great men. That could only

bring confusion and lead to the matching of the worth of one man against that of another. It would be immoral; it would contradict the ideal of those who are servants of the truth. Such discussion might even lead to one thinker's praising another one with deceitful words, saying things to flatter him. And then no friendship would be possible; for friendship is truth, just as thinking is truth. In an agitated era like this, truth was particularly important and perilous; for it had to be religious and political truth as well, that being the mandate of the times. Anyone who would not admit this profound, responsible, and often painful necessity, had better remain out of the circle. Anyone who persisted in preferring faith and hope to confidence in natural intelligence, could not understand a man like Spinoza and was not akin to him. Oldenburg's statement therefore meant a parting of the ways. It is the most important privilege of friendship for one friend to be able to tell the other that an association between them is no longer possible. This was the experience Spinoza had had with Willem van Blyenbergh: "For then I regarded you as a philosopher pure and simple, who (as many who consider themselves Christians admit) has no other touchstone for truth than natural understanding, and not theology. But you have taught me differently, and have shown me that the foundation on which I meant to build our friendship, was not what I had thought."

It is necessary to have courage to discard all theological prejudices. Compromise is impossible where truth is involved, even in questions concerning God. Spinoza demanded of his friends that they should not even use any

theological terms any more. "For since Theology, and not without reason, considers God in every way as a perfect Being, it is proper that in Theology it should be said that God is demanding something, or that God is displeased with the actions of the godless, and is pleased with the actions of the pious. But in Philosophy, we know absolutely that those attributes which make men perfect, can no more be ascribed and imputed to God, than that which makes an elephant or a donkey perfect can be attributed to man; in this sphere, these and similar words have no place and cannot be used without the greatest confusion in our conceptions. In order, therefore, to speak philosophically, one must not say that God demands something of someone, and for the same reason, that something pleases or displeases Him. These are all human attributes which are out of place with regard to God."

The feelings aroused in people by Spinoza were never more heartfelt than in Simon Joosten de Vries. He was about the same age as Spinoza, yet he played the part of a believing, adoring, enthusiastic disciple of a much more mature master, who addressed him as "the Very Learned Young Man." De Vries was a religious man who, as a Collegiant, sought a free, evangelical Christianity. He wanted Spinoza to be his guide in the spiritual distress that assailed him with all the pain of adolescence. But he also laid the troubles of his daily life before his master. De Vries belonged to that class of human beings in whom the passion for spiritual matters influences their youth to such an extent that it consumes them, and an old age that could follow these spiritually stormy years, seems unthinkable.

Like Spinoza, Simon de Vries died young, at thirty-four years of age. He had started as a business man, but his meeting with Spinoza left him no other way of life than that of a scholar. He saw the material want in which his friend lived; he saw the sacrifice and humbleness of his external existence. Thus it became a natural duty to concern himself about his master's support. He offered him 2000 guilders so that he might be relieved of his domestic cares. Despite his love, how little he knew Spinoza if he could suppose that the philosopher would accept this gift from him! How little he understood the deep meaning of Spinoza's poverty! Simon de Vries knew that he would die young, and hence wished to make Spinoza his heir. But this, too, Spinoza refused, and he persuaded his friend to bequeath his fortune to his brother. Simon de Vries needed the greatest force of persuasion, invoking all his friendship, in order to induce Spinoza to agree finally to accept an annuity from his brother, after Simon's death. He suggested five hundred guilders, but Spinoza would not accept more than three hundred; he did not need more, and he did not wish to burden his existence with the ownership of anything whatsoever.

The veneration which Simon de Vries felt for Spinoza took on a form of passionate devotion, rising to the point of jealousy. He was envious of a pupil named Caesarius, who lived in the same house where Spinoza lived. But Baruch mollified him by finding fault with Caesarius. "There is no one whom I find more disagreeable or of whom I feel that I must be more careful than him; therefore, I would like to request you and all my acquaintances

not to communicate my opinions to him until he has arrived at a more mature age. He is too young yet, too unstable, and more eager for novelty than for truth." But Caesarius grew up to be a fine man who, after many years, died as a preacher in the colonies.

They were mostly worthy and upright men. With careful and sometimes timid hands, they groped among the patterns of thought which Spinoza laid before them. All they could give him in return, were accounts of occurrences in their petty lives, their daily cares or, sometimes, isolated scientific experiments. With Robert Boyle, the influential editor of the "Boyle Lectures," Spinoza was only indirectly connected. Boyle was also hampered theologically, being full of prejudice against "notoriously unbelieving people, such as atheists, theists, heathens, Jews and Mohammedans." Consequently, it was impossible for him to understand a man like Spinoza, and there are two series of "Boyle Lectures" directed against the philosopher after his "Tractatus Theologico-Politicus" had appeared. Johan Hudde accomplished important work in mathematics and physics, particularly with regard to optics and the theory of probability. Presumably it was he who brought Spinoza into relationship with Holland's all-powerful statesman, Jan de Witt.

There were many others, too, anonymous burghers and sectarians, Dutchmen and Germans, all attracted by the breath of a new era, standing in embarrassed, uncertain admiration before the young Jewish philosopher. With one of them, the Mennonite Pieter Balling, Spinoza could speak Spanish, for he was the Amsterdam repre-

sentative of Spanish commercial houses. Balling also belonged to those members of Spinoza's circle of friends who ardently desired to confide all their personal life to the young master. They knew that his was a chaste character, that he understood everything and knew how to give help. He was kind and could sympathize with misfortune. At the time that Balling lost his child, he felt impelled to confide his despair to Spinoza. And Spinoza not only understood his sorrow but also knew that there was no greater help for freeing oneself of it than by continuing to speak of it. "It has caused me no little sadness and anxiety, although this has certainly diminished now that I dwell on the good sense and strength of character with which you know how to despise the adversities of fate, or rather of delusion, at the very time when they are assailing you with their strongest weapons. But my anxiety increases daily; and therefore I beseech and adjure you in the name of my friendship to make an effort to write me fully."

Thus, with Spinoza at their center, they stood about him. He offered his hand to many of them; but to all he offered his thoughts. From none did he ask for anything but truth and honesty. And still he remained alone. He bore the desertion of some of his adherents with a smile. Only once was he angry, and that was when Albert Burgh flung at him all the hatred and all the curses of the Inquisition, reproaching him with arrogance and sinfulness. This one and only time, Spinoza's words were sharp and severe; and yet, his anger was stilled by the thought: "For the truth reveals itself as well as falsehood."

He desired a life of quiet. It was a good thing that his friends lived in Amsterdam and in London and could not enter his house at all hours. Nevertheless, quite a number of strangers did come, and this disturbed him. Rhynsburg, which was the principal seat of the Collegiants, brought him all too near to the sectarians, who were quite distant and strange to him. As a result, in April of the year 1663, he decided to leave Rhynsburg, and to find some still quieter place to live in. He moved to Voorburg, near the Hague, where he had friends whom he could meet whenever he wished. This village, in spite of its nearness to the city, was quite secluded. Inquisitive and importunate people could not find their way to him; but his friends knew where to get in touch with him.

Here Spinoza lived for six years in the house of an artist named Daniel Tydeman. In this village there also reigned the spirit of a sectarianism which preferred to be in opposition to the official Church. The inhabitants of Voorburg wished to have a minister who would correspond to their idea of Christianity. Spinoza's landlord requested him to draft an application on his behalf to the government in Delft, which he willingly did. But when the government discovered that the writer of this application from Voorburg was none other than the infamous Spinoza, Tydeman's application was rejected. For every one in the land knew that this young scholar "was an atheist, or a person who mocked at all religions, and was certainly a dangerous element in this republic."

Spinoza heard of this judgment, but it did not surprise him any more. The curse of the Synagogue would remain

a millstone around his neck forever. It would never abandon him, but would even continue after his death. The damning hands of Rabbi Morteira would continue to reach up out of his grave toward Spinoza. Misunderstanding and solitude were Spinoza's destiny, which he endured silently and without complaint. He was never angry with people, for he knew they all had to struggle against want and danger. He desired to help them all on their road, but he himself would have to walk quite alone and without love or companionship on his own road to truth. At the end of his road, however, there would stand not only his work, but a man to whom complete fulfillment had been granted.

Ultimi barbarorum.
—SPINOZA

CHAPTER SIX

The Grand Pensionary of Holland

I

THE PEACE of Westphalia ushered in the blossoming time of the Dutch Republic. It was a period in which all the powers of the nation reached their highest development. If there is a law of history that every land at some time has its formative hour when its aspect is eternally imprinted upon the memory of posterity, then this hour had struck for the Netherlands in the middle of the seventeenth century. The year 1648 saw the Dutch State placed upon a broad and secure foundation. The era which was now beginning has often been considered by historians as one of the most flourishing periods of European civilization. The major powers sought close friendship with the young Dutch Republic in order to gain advantages for themselves. Everything in this State seemed to be blessed and flourishing.

The noblest ideal of the Netherlands was that of civic freedom. This freedom was the source and outlet of a host of deep emotions and achievements. In Descartes' opinion, there was no other country in the world where freedom had been more successfully realized. Hugo

Grotius, the great jurist, demanded that the State protect the freedom of every citizen, for its only mission was to serve the interest of each individual. He also demanded "freedom of the seas" for commerce. Henry Oldenburg, a native of Germany, wrote admiringly to Spinoza, "Your State is completely free; it permits the pursuit of philosophy in complete freedom."

The Regents were aware of the secret of Holland's prosperity, and they guarded and watched over the sacred ideal of freedom. They also protected the country's spiritual production, which quite remarkably, went parallel to its wealth and its political power, continually increasing in output and ascending to greater glory. To be sure, the Regents protected the established Church from sectarian rebels, and erected a kind of customs barrier between philosophy and theology. In the already mentioned resolution of the Dutch States, it was plainly demanded that the Trustees of the University of Leyden carefully watch the established "borders and barriers" between these two. "For the sake of freedom and peace," the Cartesian philosophy was not to be taught. But this prohibition was not meant too seriously; it was a diplomatic mollification of the Calvinist theologians, and for a long time, it did not disturb the freedom of philosophical theory and investigation. It merely intended that thoughtless exaggerations which might offend religious sensibilities were to be avoided.

Spinoza knew that for his philosophy no better protection could exist than that of the State. It raised a wall against calumny and slander, against suspicion and insult.

Through Johan Hudde, who was a member of the Dutch Parliament and Mayor of Amsterdam, he came into relationship with the Government; and Hudde was close not only to mayors and deputies, but also to the actual ruler of the country, Jan de Witt. Spinoza thought that men like Jan de Witt expressed the "will of the Nation," and that this will was intent upon freedom of thought, faith and life. Jan de Witt was the leader of the "Freedom Party" that had displaced the Orange Party in 1650. And he was also the strongest opponent of the fanatical Calvinist clergy. Spinoza was thinking of de Witt and his collaborators when he expressed the hope to Oldenburg that perhaps "there will be found some in high position in my country who will desire to see the other things I have written and have acknowledged as my own; and they will make it their business to enable me to publish them without any risk of trouble."

But never is the idea of freedom more menaced than at the time of its greatest triumphs. People distrusted the reality for which their fathers had fought and died. They mistrusted themselves and were afraid of the free life that lay before them. They also distrusted their leaders, who were a part of themselves, who had risen out of their midst and had looked for no other benefit than that of the community and the peaceful harmony of their brothers. Spinoza thought that the best constitution was one under which people could live together in harmony. "By harmony I do not mean the external, physical living together which is expressed in the blood circulation and in all the other functions common to all living beings;

but rather, in the common, unanimous application of reason, in associated activities, and in the working and sharing of the real life of the spirit." This harmony, however, was menaced by those for whom freedom and peace only meant inaction and weakness, and by those who had always distrusted their leaders and had cast suspicion upon them. In the Netherlands this proved to be the tragedy of Jan de Witt.

De Witt was the greatest and most remarkable statesman that his country had produced. All the tendencies of the northern Renaissance, all the creative power of this Dutch century, all the advances in knowledge, were joined in his mighty personality. Even the theoretical spirit of the age acquired practical meaning in him, for Jan de Witt was not only a politician who towered over all the others, not only a brilliant organizer and financier, but also a thinker of keen understanding and great intellectual ardor. He was a mathematician and a naturalist, not merely an amateur but possessing a deep-seated instinct for investigation. His philosophical attitude also characterized his political life. He treated all practical questions with earnestness and profound thought, and with a philosophical superiority in which there existed no separation between theoretical reflection and political practice. His manner of acting in financial decisions was based on exact mathematical calculations. Mathematics made him creative. In the field of ordnance, he invented chain shot; and with his work on the "Elements of Curved Lines," the first textbook on analytical geometry, he entered the history of mathematics. Together with Christian Huygens and

Johan Hudde, he devoted himself to the newest mathematical problem: the theory of probability. His scientific mind also dictated his political actions, just as it governed his faith in freedom. If any statesman in that century seemed to be chosen to fulfill the mission of the new spirit in public life, it was Jan de Witt.

But history often prefers the tragic ruin of its leaders. Jan de Witt showed an astonished world the greatness of his mind and the fruitfulness of the new scientific thought even in the realm of politics. He allowed his philosophy to triumph; and for this, he was condemned to die, doomed by the people, whose happiness and freedom he had desired, but who did not have the capacity to understand him. Spinoza had sensed that their brutish stupidity would turn against their spiritual leader, bringing death to this free, intelligent and humane man. Therefore he raised his voice against this deed. For the first time, and against his own principles, he did not restrain his violent emotion. He knew that never before had a nobler and more innocent man been murdered. De Witt had been pure and great; and they had both shared the same belief in the power of reason and in the good sense of men.

Jan De Witt had always had before his eyes an earlier example of the struggle for liberty. As a child, he had often been told the tale of the fortunes and the tragic end of the Grand Pensionary, Johan van Oldenbarneveldt, who had had to pay with his life for his struggle in behalf of religious freedom. It was a tale that evoked ghostly memories of the dark powers of the past in this bright land of freedom. De Witt's family home in Dordrecht,

however, breathed a modern, progressive, and liberal spirit. His parents were good Calvinists and republicans. They belonged to the aristocracy of the city, and carefully reared their children in a kind and humane atmosphere.

Jan de Witt was born in 1625, which meant that his childhood had been spent during the great European war. By the time the treaty of peace was signed, his education was completed. Superficially, it seemed to have been an education following the conventional pattern; deep within, however, it led to a prodigious development of his mind, which even in his youth commanded the admiration and astonishment of his contemporaries. As a twenty-two-year-old lawyer, he was called "the marvel of Holland." Many years later, when Pieter de la Court published the memoirs of this great statesman, he described him as "one of the greatest of European geniuses." Jan de Witt confessed that the greatest pleasure of his youth had been the time he had occupied himself with history, philosophical speculation and politics. When he entered public life as a mathematician, he became renowned for his deliberate restraint and the logic and lucidity of his mind. These qualities, together with great strength of will, were already in evidence when he was a child. Christian Huygens, after having read de Witt's writings on geometry, regretted that this young man had chosen politics for his career; otherwise he would certainly have become the greatest mathematician of his era. But Huygens had no notion of the demonic spirit that drove Jan de Witt into politics, into the passionate struggle for the interests and the free-

dom of his country, and into a terrible death for his political convictions.

When still in school, Jan de Witt and his brother, Cornelius, had already come under the influence of Descartes' philosophy and the humanistic spirit. At a school performance of a play about Julius Caesar, Jan had once played the leading role, and thus, as a youthful actor, had anticipated his own destiny. His studies at the university were of primary importance for the instruction he received in the law, but Jan pursued his studies in mathematics much more zealously and earnestly. After that, both brothers went abroad to acquire a knowledge of the world. They travelled through France and England, and saw the great changes that had taken place in the thoughts and beliefs of Europe.

On their return from this trip, Jan was sworn in as an advocate in the Dutch Court. But this calling left him time enough to follow his other studies even more profoundly and assiduously. It was then that he produced his "Elements of Curved Lines." Literature also fascinated him, but politics at this time seemed to him a grim, inimical affair because of his father's fate. The elder de Witt, together with five other deputies of the Dutch Parliament, had been arrested by the Governor, William II of Orange. Jan knew that his father was innocent, and he also understood the intentions of the House of Orange.

The struggle to free Jacob de Witt meant not only the liberation of Jan's father, but also a victory over the Orange party, which he considered the greatest enemy

of the Republic and of the spirit of freedom. His father's destiny was also to determine his own career. At that time he prayed to God "that He should permit these fortunate times to last for many years, these times in which, in this country and in the States of Holland and West Friesland, one can think and write anything which might tend toward the happiness and the welfare of the Fatherland." In his eyes, there was no greater duty for a citizen than to advance everything that might support and increase the power and freedom of his native land.

De Witt's political career began in his home city of Dordrecht. It opened with a struggle to free the Regents from the House of Orange, and to secure the Republic against any form of monarchy. In the shadow of his memory were images of the Spanish despotism, the menacing figure of Philip II, and the terror of the Inquisition.

The city of Dordrecht had not always fought on the side of the liberal Regents against the House of Orange. In the case of Oldenbarneveldt, it had taken a stand against the defendant. The prosperous city was at that time not yet sufficiently aware of the existing dangers. Only in the time of William II did the reaction take place.

The alert intelligence and political astuteness of Jan de Witt served him in his quick rise in the government of his home city. While still in his early years, he became "Pensionaris van Dordrecht," the head of the city's administration and, at the same time, a deputy of the district. He was a member of the "Staten-General," the Parliament of the Republic. Soon he began to play a leading role there too, so that, in spite of his youth, he was looked

upon as a coming statesman in the political circles of the country. He busied himself with questions of foreign politics, especially with regard to the relations between the Netherlands and England. The "Raadpensionaris van Holland"—the title of the head of the Foreign Office—was Adrian Pauw, who was a dying man. After his death, Jan de Witt became the acting minister. He assumed office at a most difficult moment. There was an unfortunate war on with England, and the people were enraged by the demagogic struggle of the House of Orange against the liberal party.

The Netherlands knew that in those restless times it could not entrust the leadership of the State to a better or a stronger man than Jan de Witt. On the 23rd of July, 1653, he was definitely appointed "Grand Pensionary of Holland." But under him this office meant more than the name implied; he became the actual leader of the country. He was only twenty-eight years old at the time. The gates of international politics were open to him; but it was also the new, liberated spirit of a scholarly era that entered into power.

II

At the beginning of this new age there were two philosophical works which stood like the pillars of a triumphal arch: Francis Bacon's "Novum Organon" and René Descartes' "Discours de la Méthode."

There was a great contrast in the thinking of these two men, a contrast between induction and deduction,

empiricism and rationalism, natural science and spiritual ideals. The same contrast existed in the era itself as it was developing in all spheres of thought, life and politics. Nevertheless, by reason of the changes which the Renaissance had brought about, there was a unity in this generation. The turning away from the spirit of absolutism of the Church and the decline of the feudal system, the rise of the middle classes and of an urban aristocracy, the growth of individualism in every walk of life, and of Protestantism in religion—signified exactly the same radical alienation from the Middle Ages as the anti-scholastic change in the new philosophy. In this, Bacon and Descartes were in accord; and, as they both followed divergent paths, it can be seen how great and rich the Baroque world had become.

Almost always, a blossoming time in history is accompanied by contrast; its life never runs along a single track. Every era is aware of this. But no thinker who is imbued with the spirit of his times could have felt these contrasts more strongly than Spinoza. His Spanish past had already stood between the poles of freedom and bondage; and this same contrast was also the widest—the most beneficial and destructive at the same time—of the Baroque period, under whose rich heaven wars, art and knowledge blossomed. To find security and a happy middle path was more than diplomacy and caution; it was a question of actual existence and of a productive future. Jan de Witt knew this as a statesman; and Spinoza realized it as a philosopher.

Both fought on the same front against Scholasticism

and Clericalism in the war for the spirit of freedom. The victory over Scholasticism was not only achieved by the new natural science of Kepler and Galileo, but also by the lively mind of Montaigne, who, by critical skepticism, freed ethics from theological tutelage and aroused the intellect from its dogmatic slumber. Particularly in its last phase, Scholasticism stood for an impotent, over-subtle splitting of hairs and a de-humanizing of philosophy. But the politics of Scholasticism had also disregarded human freedom, the rights of nations and of individuals, whereas the new times paid homage to the powers and rights of human nature and reason.

With Hugo Grotius, justice was subjected to reason, and hence was freed from the fetters of theology. It no longer served for the realization of church dogma, but rather for the welfare and concord of the human community. Jan de Witt also knew that a ruler's greatest advantage lay in securing the happiness of his people. He admitted frankly that "The best government is one in which the rulers find it to their best advantage when the people are well off; one in which the rulers of large cities and states consider it their duty to devote themselves to keeping them populated, prosperous, strong and powerful, as far as possible; since all rulers and magistrates, as well as all those who are employed in these cities, thus gain the greatest power, honor and profit. That is the reason why we usually see that republics prosper more, in knowledge, commerce, population, power and wealth, than monarchic communities." As a mathematician and statesman, Jan de Witt understood the fundamental contrast between

Bacon and Descartes, between experience and reason, life and spirit. He experienced this contrast as the greatest tension and at the same time the greatest wealth of his era.

Worldly life, however, was little concerned with these philosophical problems. Even if Spinoza's thinking, true to the tradition of his ancestors, began with God at its summit, yet he himself knew that the laws which God had given on Mount Sinai were meant for life here on earth. Spinoza's existence was quiet and solitary, remote from all loud and boisterous pleasures; and yet it was filled to the brim with love of life. He desired that life should be noble and pure for all people, free from the injustices of force and the heartbreaking miseries of want. Indeed, Spinoza believed in life and its enjoyment, for he had faith in man. "It is a dark, miserable superstition which forbids us to enjoy life in moderation, and to take pleasure in its beauty." He also had no desire that his thoughts should be taken as a dream in an ivory tower. He wished to face the world and help mankind. The clear, lucid eyes of the thinker could not regard life as a senseless chaos, a dark and sad realm of inordinate appetites and hatreds. There had to be a goal, a supreme good, and an ethical intention that pursued this goal. Spinoza, the man of metaphysics, had also been exposed to practical experiences. He had suffered enough in the shadow of curses, slander and illness to allow his thinking to dwell with increasing frequency upon the problems of real life.

In a personal vein and in acknowledgment of his mission, he declared his decision to find out "if anything exists which is a real good which we can share, and with which

alone, to the exclusion of everything else, our soul can be suffused." In a similar vein he wrote, "I wonder if there is something that I could find and lay hold of, that might enable me to enjoy a perpetual and complete satisfaction." The advantages that honor and wealth can promise are petty and deceitful in comparison with a higher joy. By riches, honors and the pleasures of the senses, our mind becomes so chained that it can think of no other good. We must not be satisfied with the possession of these things, or else we jeopardise our chances of understanding the real meaning of life. Spinoza realized these perils. We must seek remedies; we must try to find help for ourselves in this inadequate world of illusions and deceitful appearances through which our life takes its course. With all our strength we must seek this unknown remedy, as "a dying man foresees his certain death if no remedy is found, and uses all his strength to find some medicine, even a doubtful one; for upon it rests his only hope."

Never again did Spinoza express so passionately and so openly his belief in the humanitarian mission of philosophy. Could he be called a cold rationalist if he feverishly sought spiritual remedies? It is precisely words like these which demonstrate that even the coolest and most objective system of learning may be filled with emotional fire. However, perfection does not lie in the confession of one's needs but rather in their conquest through spiritual action. Spinoza knew that the love of an everlasting, eternal object nourishes the soul with pure joy. We must make every effort to overcome covetousness, sensuality and ambition. That is the essence of a higher asceticism

which protects us from an inordinate thirst for pleasure, and which looks eternal values square in the face. It was this goal that Spinoza set for philosophical reasoning, in his "Treatise on the Improvement of the Understanding; and on the Best Way to be Brought to a True Knowledge of Things."

The brief, fragmentary essay was written when he was still in Rhynsburg, in 1661 or 1662. Thus, for the first time, a treatise of his was destined for the public; but it reached them only as a fragment and as a literary legacy. Perhaps it was the very personal nature of the introduction which disquieted Spinoza and made him put the little manuscript aside, to be forgotten. To Oldenburg, Spinoza declared, "With regard to your new questions, namely, how things began to be and by what bond they depend on the first cause, I have written a whole booklet on this subject and also on the improvement of the understanding; and I have been engaged in copying it out and improving it. But sometimes I leave the work aside since I do not have any definite plan yet for its publication. I am naturally afraid lest the theologians of our time take offence, and with their usual hatred attack me, who utterly loathe quarrels."

In Bacon and Descartes, the question of method had arisen. This question was also central in Spinoza's treatise, particularly since both his great forerunners had begun their philosophies with a discourse on method. In the dispute between Descartes and Bacon concerning deduction and induction, Spinoza was completely Cartesian, although he did not follow Descartes in detail. He did not

care for criticism; it was not his way "to lay bare the errors of others." He freed himself as much from the errors as from the truths of the hitherto existing methods insofar as they merely served as a means of finding additional and different methods. It is much more our task to make increasing use of the tools of our understanding so that our learning may stride forward to ever more difficult problems. The ultimate proof of a method consists in its power to demonstrate a true idea, to understand nature so that we can understand ourselves; for, in directing our mind toward a recognition of the highest Being, our mind recognizes itself and also nature; and it can become the salvation of our soul. Spinoza did not rely on words as the Scholastics did, for in words there could always exist doubt and skepticism. And skeptical questioning eventually ends in silence with regard to the problems which affect us deeply. Spinoza found it impossible to discuss the matter of knowledge in such terms.

The essence of method is the improvement of the understanding. We must make the mind skillful so that it can understand things completely and truly. We must overcome prejudices by discovering their causes. As a metaphysician, Spinoza taught that all our ideas are of intellectual origin and are derived from the true idea within us, which we must employ as a tool. The more the mind is able to recognize the truth, the more perfect becomes its method. Ultimate perfection is reached "when the mind is directed toward the knowledge of the most perfect Being, or returns to It." Such was Spinoza's theory of method as set forth in this brief treatise. It was to

distinguish the true idea from all other phenomena, and then—in the Cartesian sense—to subject it to proof for clarity and distinctness.

Why were these thoughts not developed in Spinoza's main work, especially since every philosophy of the Baroque period was based on a theory of method, just as the philosophy after Kant was based on a theory of knowledge? By the omission of these thoughts from his "Ethics," Spinoza's passion for metaphysical thinking triumphed over the formal inquiries with which he could not be delayed in his main work because he wished it to represent completely a perfect model of God and nature. The brief fragment was only meant to give the essence of the true idea and its correct derivation by means of precise definitions. A twofold faith was expressed in this treatise, which was intended for the general public, but which did not reach it until many years later: it was the faith in an active rather than passive knowledge, and the faith in an idea which was the source of nature as well as of the mind. Indeed, all existence—spiritual as well as physical—has its root in the idea of God. We must not forget that ideas are the more perfect, the more their objects are perfect. "For we do not admire an architect who has constructed a simple house, as much as one who has constructed a magnificent temple."

Spinoza, too, was now engaged in constructing a magnificent temple. He was about to proclaim in the new language of science and with a new significance the ancient Jewish idea of God's unity. He no longer thought of that simple, vague Pantheism taught in the house of Franciscus

van den Enden, the hapless teacher; that Pantheism which Schopenhauer criticized by saying that, while it designated the world with the name of God, it "merely added to language a superfluous synonym for the word 'World.'" In deepest awe and humility before the workings of the divine Being, freed from ceremony and superstition, and under the supervision of natural understanding and ethical reason, Spinoza was to be the conscious priest of knowledge in the temple of his philosophy. Neither force nor inertia of the spirit would rule in this temple; free expression was to be allowed even on the subject of religion. That was the true idea of Spinoza's "mathematical Pantheism!"

From 1661 to 1675, Spinoza labored at his main work. The beginning of his career had been occupied with prayer and learning; then had come research, which for him was a farewell to men and doctrines; and finally there came the great, painful emptiness of free, solitary thought. Spinoza had now become an architect; now he was compelled to complete the great, creative work which was to give him his life's vindication and joy, and for which he had willingly suffered exile, calumny, betrayal and poverty. However, the work was not to be a testimony to his own personality and life but only one to the pure, sacred truth. To find truth, to build up a world upon the knowledge of pure reason: that would be the greatest happiness and the deepest realization of the idea of love for God—"Amor Dei Intellectualis." Truth is also freedom; and never is a man more independent of every good and bad constraint than when he follows the road of truth to the

end. That does not mean that life should be neglected, nor does it mean the turning away from current events or from the creative forces of the times. Theoretical knowledge does not stand alongside of life but above it, radiating light and warmth over everything and everyone.

Spinoza also built his temple of knowledge as a school for the acquisition of a moral way of life. He who is of high intelligence not only desires to know a subject in all its ramifications but also desires to uproot all interference with the acquisition of this knowledge: hate, anger, envy, derision and arrogance. "All his activities were now focused on how he could actively help his neighbor, and how he could avoid becoming burdensome by ill temper either to his neighbor or to himself." Thus, the goal of knowledge should not be separated from our conduct of life. Life must be dedicated to the good of our fellow creatures. Spinoza, the most solitary of souls, also was a preacher of social assistance.

That is why his last years were dedicated to the construction of a political philosophy; for the State is the place for the promotion of all the interests and ideas of the community. In his Netherlands home, which he never left, Spinoza witnessed the realization of a new concept of the State, filled with the spirit of free inquiry and desirous of the prosperity of its citizens. However, this new concept of the State was combatted and menaced from many sides. All the forces of politics and all the European powers were struggling in war and in peace for a new form of State and society. This stirring reality did not distract Spinoza from the clear outline of his thoughts;

at peace with them? Jan de Witt knew the dangers of isolation for his country if it were to try to settle "its affairs without some kind of fast friendship or dependable alliance with important powers." Thus he stood, the leader of the nation, in war and in peace, with the deepest anxiety in his heart for the internal and external freedom of his countrymen, confronted with the enormous task of forming friendships with neighboring countries which were natural rivals of the Republic. He was successful in making a treaty with France and England; and, in the year 1668, even succeeded in concluding the Triple Alliance, which forced Louis XIV to sign the peace of Aix. It was a great accomplishment in the history of this century. In this accomplishment, however, the spirit of reason also triumphed, as did the spirit of independence from all opposition which had stood in the way of the happiness of the people.

The Grand Pensionary of Holland was obliged to accomplish his work alone under the distrustful eyes of his countrymen. From Vienna the rumor spread that he had been bribed by France. "Rumors," Jan de Witt thought, "for which I should really be glad; for it means that they could find nothing to blame me for but this, whereas everyone here very well knows that I am in no way contaminated with such filth." He knew that only few men were capable of judging his way of ruling with any proper criterion. He had well-founded reasons for his distrust of the masses who were to reap the benefit of his efforts. Like a true pupil of Spinoza, he acknowledged that "Most

people do not judge according to reason, but according to their emotions."

In their origin and character, their destiny and vocation, and in their appearance and way of life, Jan de Witt and Baruch Spinoza were quite far apart. Between the ruler of the Republic, a Dutch aristocrat, and the poor Jew, familiarity seemed to be hardly possible. Granted that one was liberal minded, that one had freed oneself from religious prejudice, that one looked out from the Dutch seaport towns into the great, open world; there was nevertheless the matter of social pride, which sometimes rose to that haughtiness which Rembrandt had had to endure so painfully. After all, this Spinoza was nothing more than a miserable Jew, exiled from his community. Even Christian Huygens, that great, gentle and free intellect, called Spinoza "the Jew of Voorburg" or the "Israelite." Of course, he had no desire to cast contempt on him, but nevertheless he felt obliged to express the fact that he belonged to another world.

The ruler of the land no doubt had similar feelings, but he was close to Spinoza spiritually. Since de Witt was an intellectual statesman, and filled also with a faith in the power of ideas in all practical acts, it can be said that the proximity of these two men was greater than the distance between them.

Spinoza knew this, and for that reason he also realized how necessary it was for him to have the protection of the head of the government for his philosophy. We surmise that Spinoza and de Witt first came into personal contact

when the statesman was at the zenith of his power and his great political success. They might have had conversations on mathematical and philosophical subjects. They must have sensed their mutual faith, which bound them together more strongly than their differences could separate them. Each must have felt himself deeply attracted and affected by the genius of the other.

In the camp of those who were inimical to the Grand Pensionary and his party, and who worked for his downfall, this relationship and the protection which the ruler of the country conferred upon the hated philosopher, were known. They would not forget it. They would make a political issue out of this intellectual friendship, transforming the thanks they owed these two men for their accomplishments into ribaldry, venom and deceit. After de Witt's murder in 1672, several lampoons appeared concerning him. These lampoons pointed an accusing finger at certain books in the statesman's library. Of Spinoza's "Theological-Political Treatise" it was said, "By the heretic Jew, Spinoza, originating in Hell; in which, in an unheard of, atheistic manner, it is demonstrated that the word of God must be explained and understood through philosophy; and this has been published with the knowledge of Mynheer Jan." Thus, the great and almost unique bit of good fortune accruing to the country through the association of two great compatriots and through the protection of new ideas by a free, prosperous State, was degraded into infamy, hatred and murder.

This protection was shown not only in the personal

good will of the Grand Pensionary and in the unhindered printing of Spinoza's writings, but also in pecuniary aid; for Jan de Witt, so it was said, had an annuity granted to the philosopher. Spinoza felt that he could take money from the head of the government, for in him the State was personified, a State to which his own ideas of freedom and reason stood very close. Besides, it was the State in which he had his home. He accepted the money only in order to be able to exist, only to provide himself with the barest essentials of food and clothing. His income from the grinding of optical lenses had appreciably decreased during the stormy years of the war. His handicraft was no longer sufficient to support him. The help he received from the State was by no means a donation of alms, but rather a recompense for his philosophical labor, to which Spinoza could now dedicate himself with greater joy and contentment, knowing that he had the support and recognition of the most important and powerful man in the country. Not even a professorship at a university could have afforded him this satisfaction; for "the universities, founded at the expense of the States are created less for the education of the mind than for its limitation."

Spinoza did not consider this yearly income as a gift from man to man, but rather as a subsidy from those liberal political forces which now ruled the country. For this reason, he took it for granted that this support from the State would continue even after Jan de Witt's death. When his successors created difficulties, in spite of the clear intent of de Witt's written declaration, Spinoza silently left the chamber. He wished neither to beg nor

to institute legal proceedings, but only to receive what had been promised him, and what he had customarily received. This silence convinced de Witt's successors so decisively in favor of Spinoza's rights, that they gladly continued to pay him his yearly income.

III

While Spinoza, year after year, was dedicating himself wholly to a quiet, solitary life which furthered the completion of his main work, dark clouds were gathering over the freedom of the Netherlands and over the life of Jan de Witt. In the midst of European confusion and wars for power, the little Republic, surrounded by its great and mighty neighbors, had a hard time preserving its freedom and prosperity. The dynastic states, to which the English now again belonged, looked distrustfully at the democratic Republic and its belief in freedom which could so easily cross the frontiers and threaten the safety of their thrones. They would have liked, if possible, to strengthen the power of the House of Orange. They feared and hated the Grand Pensionary, who more than anyone else, represented the republican spirit, carefully and shrewdly guarding the interests of his country. There was internal unrest in the Republic, dissension and suspicion between the provinces; and in the background was the monarchical threat of the House of Orange. Storms were brewing for the year 1672, the year that would destroy the freedom of the Netherlands, Jan de Witt's life work, and, finally, the man himself. In the history of the Netherlands, this year

stands out like a terrible hailstorm destroying a beautiful, fruitful harvest. It was a year of grief, degradation and shame, a year of darkness, casting its shadows over the happiness of a country, the dream of an idea and the existence of a very great man.

The peace of Aix, which had been the culmination of Jan de Witt's work in foreign policy, had not, after all, become a firm and durable basis for the future peace of Europe. The Triple Alliance was not a final solution to European problems; it had its inner weaknesses. Jan de Witt believed firmly in his work, and was not so much preoccupied with the relationship of the Netherlands to neighboring States. He was more concerned with the idea of internal freedom, with the improvement of his administration and the well-being of his people. It was some time before his country's distrust of its allies began to penetrate into his mind. It induced him to check carefully all the reports that came to him from beyond the frontier, particularly those from France. Finally he realized the danger. With his faith in European peace threatened, and with bitterness in his heart, he knew that he would have to prepare himself for new campaigns.

Was it then impossible for this century of the reign of free spirit and reason to become a century of peace as well? Must people always be sacrificed to the struggles for power and the petty, insatiable ambition of their leaders? Jan de Witt, however, was also a patriot, deeply devoted to the glory of his country. He loved Holland with a heartfelt attachment stemming from the as yet unfulfilled realization of his dreams. He knew that the army

had not been sufficiently developed for a large-scale war, and that it had to be reinforced as quickly as possible. An army officer had once warned him that the Dutch seemed to feel that wars had ceased to exist. Jan de Witt, too, had fondly hoped that there would be no war. But now he found himself obliged to prepare for a new adventure in which more than merely a question of victory or defeat was at stake. The very future of freedom was endangered. The Grand Pensionary had recently been busy with new ideas in economy which would have served to improve the State's financial condition. He had worked out a system of loans in the form of life annuities, a system which was designed for the financing of armaments on land and on sea. His memorandum entitled "The Value of Life Annuities in Comparison with Redemption Annuities," became a historical document in political economy.

War had not yet been declared, but already peace within the country was imperiled. The defense against the powerful neighboring states was a welcome signal for all those who were not satisfied with the home government. In their eyes, the menace of war was not only directed against the fortunes of their country but also against the hated system of freedom that had been rigorously and successfully carried out by Jan de Witt. The friends of war contemptuously referred to "these rogues who have made peace." There were dreams of military triumphs; but some were concerned as to whether the country was sufficiently armed on land and at sea. Above all, however, many people dreamed of a strong, warlike and brilliant executive power, much like that represented by the abso-

lute monarchy of Louis XIV, the most dangerous enemy of the country. Those who were fond of this dream believed it could be realized by the House of Orange. Their adherents became ever more numerous, their words more belligerent and their demands more dangerous. But Jan de Witt wished to remain the guardian of freedom both at home and abroad. Thus he stood in the midst of dangers which continually fanned the flame of his energies. He decided to fight for the good of his country, with arms as well as with his mathematical and economic ideas. He knew how superhuman this task was, and he sensed that, whatever the issue, he would be the victim.

First of all the question of the military supreme command had to be decided. There had been no supreme command in the years of peace in the Republic. The entire question involved the political power of the Orange family, which was so closely connected with the military glory of the country. For reasons that went deeper than the Parliament suspected, Jan de Witt had always opposed the naming of the Prince of Orange to the rank of Captain-General. Even from abroad, efforts had been made to influence his decision; most of all by the Elector of Brandenburg, who hated the spirit of republicanism, and tried his utmost to make the Orange Princes into monarchs again. Calmly and soberly Jan de Witt had avoided this interference, informing the Elector's government "that it was not seemly for a foreign Prince to meddle, by means of a public memorandum, in an affair which concerned one State alone, and was purely an internal affair." The politics of the English Restoration also

supported the claims of the House of Orange. Was there no one at all in Holland who saw the true motives of Charles II? In pursuing their goal, did the deaf and blind enemies of freedom also desire to sacrifice the national independence of the Netherlands?

Jan de Witt soon realized that he would not always be able to oppose the military demands of the Prince. After long discussions, William III of Orange was named Captain-General, but only for one campaign. In the meantime, the destiny of the State was becoming increasingly darker, more insecure and hopeless. England was demanding recognition as mistress of the seas, and France was allied with England. When the declarations of war were handed to the Republic in April, 1672, Jan de Witt was far from permitting himself any easy illusions. This war would decide everything, yes, everything that stood for the vindication of this generation and this country. As a pious Christian he hoped, "that the Lord God would sooner or later properly punish the infamy that the English court had perpetrated against this State and against its own nation, and would mercifully bless the cause of this State, which is justified in His sight." But more than a Christian, Jan de Witt was a sober statesman and planner. He would do all that was possible to preserve the Republic and the spirit of freedom. He gave one last glance at the world of his books and his thoughts before saying farewell to them. Those in sympathy with him and those opposed to him thought only of victory and of booty. Perhaps the only one who knew that more depended on this game than merely things such as these, was the Jew-

ish philosopher. Again Jan de Witt was forced to become a military leader. Cornelius, his brother in spirit as well as in blood, he placed next to himself and ordered him to prepare the fleet for sailing. Troops marched through the streets, and drums, with loud and hollow sound, rolled out the signal for departure. It was also a farewell to the freedom of the Republic.

Jan de Witt worked as this greatest of workers for his people had never worked before. The usual division of the day into hours no longer existed for him. He forced the Parliament to continue its deliberations until far into the night; and on some days he couldn't even find the time for a single meal. He knew better than anyone else the intentions of the enemy. They wished to rob the State of a good part of its domain and to bring the remainder entirely under their authority. The Prince of Orange was a good soldier and good patriot. He wished to work in harmony with the statesman; but both of them knew that after the war, their joint exercise of power would have to come to an end.

The enormous demands which were now made on the Grand Pensionary, and the even greater menace of the future seemed to increase his strength. At any moment, his adversaries might suddenly fall upon him and cast him into chains; but then, like another Samson, he would gather all his strength and destroy his enemies. Jan de Witt did not care either for personal success or for glory. He had gone into the twofold struggle for the internal and outer freedom of the country because he had been compelled to do so and because his life depended upon its

success. Just as in the case of Spinoza, arrogance and pettiness were foreign to his nature. To a philosopher these traits, carried to an extreme, "were only signs of the greatest impotence and weakness of spirit." In this war, not only action but also the faith in freedom would be decisive. Like a priest ready to die a martyr to his faith, Jan de Witt assumed the leadership in this war. He had not wanted it, and had scarcely suspected its coming. Perhaps he had prepared his country too late. For others it was easier. They were the incorrigibles who did not desire peace and freedom, and who did not know the power of reason. Like children, they had become intoxicated by external splendor, and only heard high-sounding, vacuous phrases which they never doubted; for they did not know that doubt, according to Descartes, was the beginning of all thinking. They were all thus, willingly bowing under the cruel yoke of martial triumph and the force of slavery and ignorance.

These were the sort of people Jan de Witt now had to approach and speak to: "In these days of peril, we belong together. The future of our country is at stake. I wish to be your leader now too, and would gladly sacrifice my life for the freedom of the nation." They listened to him apathetically; they did not contradict him; but neither did they believe him. If this war should end badly, they would take their first revenge on him; for he was the apostle of freedom, which they, as incorrigible adherents to the ideas of power and mistrust, had never been able to understand.

Jan de Witt went into this war as a soldier and as a

diplomat. He succeeded in winning over Spain, their oldest and bitterest enemy, to the cause of the Republic. He placed his faith in the fleet, which was commanded by his brother. With exuberant spirits, he transmitted his commands, advice and also his worries to the military leaders. But the course of the war was unfavorable to the Netherlands.

Fear of the conquering enemy pressed into the heart of the country and created unrest, disunion, despair and confusion. Want, hunger and fear stalked through the streets. The common topic of conversation was complaint and anxiety. In days of despair like these, the darkest, blindest and most hate-filled passions of the multitude come to the surface, casting their lurid suspicions into the dwellings of the powerful in order to find a victim for their hopelessness.

To seek out the general cause of trouble is more difficult than to seek out an individual upon whom to fasten the blame. The latter is generally done first, and the former is forgotten. Already, in dark alleys, ugly voices were whispering the old rumor that Jan de Witt had been bribed by the French king. The worse the war news became, and the more terrible the confusion, the more the suspicion about the leader of the State solidified. Particularly among the youth, he was now characterized as nothing but a traitor and a scoundrel. In some of these young people, hatred and suspicion changed into a senseless, murderous lust for blood.

Under the leadership of Jacob van der Graeff, they lay in ambush for the Grand Pensionary as he was coming

from a late night session in the summer of 1672, and wounded him seriously. Jan de Witt felt that this dagger in the hands of immature boys was not only aimed at his life, but also at those ideas which he had served from the time of his childhood. And even though the boys had not been successful in killing him, yet the attempt and the attitude it represented had struck a mortal blow against the holy creed of this century, the creed of Spinoza and of Jan de Witt. The State still sided with its leader, and Jakob van der Graeff, the perpetrator of this crime, was executed. But in dark corners of the people's consciousness, he was honored as a martyr to the cause of his country. And from these same sources came more and more of the base slander, suspicion, lies and absurdities that were directed against Jan de Witt.

On that day, the 21st of June, 1672, struck by the dagger of these young fanatics, de Witt was obliged to acknowledge that his days, his work and the freedom of the Netherlands were at an end. While his serious wounds were slowly healing, he wrote an account for himself about this occurrence, with the same clearness and sobriety he had been accustomed to use in state affairs or in his beloved mathematical researches. It was not his intention to stand by and watch the malicious, hate-filled eyes following the separate stages of his downfall. No, Jan de Witt would willingly lay down his power and relinquish the political platform. In a single day he had become a sick and broken old man. His life had been spared, but his future could only be considered a form of dying. And such an end is better accomplished in private than before

the eyes of the world. This renunciation, this decision to step down, again made the great statesman seem strange and inscrutable to his enemies. The best among them realized that they could never rejoice at their victory.

Rampant, loud and vulgar, the vituperation and slander against Jan de Witt swept through the narrow streets of the Dutch towns. It spread abroad into public life and into print, in libellous pamphlets, in the scurrilous sheets of the gutter, in all the organs of venomous political abuse. No calumny was too base to be levelled against this man, who only a short time before had been acknowledged and admired by the whole world as the leader of his country. Both Jan and his brother Cornelius, together with certain generals, were said to have betrayed the Netherlands to France. Their ambition and their self-interest were said to be limitless. It was even rumored that this "malicious and crafty breed" had attempted to murder the Prince of Orange. And they claimed it had been proved that the Grand Pensionary had embezzled public funds.

Under emotional titles and captions concealing the foulest abuse, those lies were foisted upon the public. Quite in the fashion of the day, although a mockery of its rationalism, they called themselves "Spectacles for all Eyes," or a "Warning to all Highminded and Loyal Inhabitants of the Netherlands." But from another side, too, and by the abuse of the only spiritual authority in the nation, the persecution was carried on against the noblest victim of the country. Was not the Grand Pensionary of Holland also an enemy of the Church, a god-

less heretic, a scorner of Christ, and the founder of a pagan sect? Now, suddenly, they remembered. And with a good deal of satisfaction, all the orthodox told each other that Jan de Witt had always shunned association with church dignitaries, and, on the other hand, was very friendly with free-thinkers. How indulgently and unwillingly he had carried on the fight against impious Cartesianism! He had turned a deaf ear to the warnings of the theologians and conservative professors, but to the liberal-minded Professor Heidanus he had made it clear that the government would only proceed against any unwise exaggerations by the philosophers, and for the rest, would leave them complete liberty. The de Witts, moreover—and this was known for a fact—were the founders of a new religion called the "Witt Veneration of God"; and its adherents called themselves "Wittists." And then also, there was his friendship with that recreant Jew, Spinoza, that most terrible blasphemer who was the disgrace of the country and the curse of the century.

What was known of Spinoza was what the sages of the land had proclaimed. Professor Theodor Rijkius had only a short time before declared how much the writings of this Jew had harmed the State, in as much as they tried to upset the foundations of the holy faith in Christianity. "Unfortunately, we live in an era in which people are all too prone to give ear to ungodliness." A German professor, Jacob Thomasius, greatly shocked, cried out that the author of the "Theological-Political Treatise" was an "abominable monster"; and a Remonstrant preacher,

Philipp van Limborch, also moaned, "what monstrosities our Holland has brought forth."

Greedily the raging multitude took up all these reports and threw them into the flaming conflagration of a common hatred of Jan de Witt. Yes, it was certain that he had deceived the country in the vilest way, in act and word, in thought and feeling, day and night, through the years and decades. Once Jan de Witt had dreamed that he could make his countrymen happy, free and humane. The answer that the streets were now giving him was a bitter disillusionment.

He had only a quiet, resigned smile for all these accusations; it was also a smile of farewell to his belief in the freedom and the moral reasoning powers of his country. His regal pride and his aristocratic attitude forbade him to defend himself against this kind of slander. Only one reproach pained him so deeply that it forced him into violent protest and a demand for revindication; it was the accusation of having embezzled public funds. No deed, no crime would have been more contemptible to him. Like Spinoza, Jan de Witt hated the vice of greed for money, the "never satiated increase of possessions"; and there is nothing worse than when this greed tries to satisfy itself at the expense of public funds.

In answer to this accusation, the Grand Pensionary requested a parliamentary investigation which would prove that he had never embezzled public funds. His wish was granted. His other request to be relieved of office was accepted by the public even more gladly. The City of

Amsterdam expressed the wish that the release should be accomplished in an "honorable manner" and with an expression of the country's gratitude to its greatest public official; but in compliance with a wish of the Prince of Orange, the "honorable" character of the document was not stressed. The public was satisfied with this end to the political career of the greatest statesman and the most noted leader the nation had ever had. It was hoped that quiet and order would be preserved in the land, and that an acceptable peace could be obtained. Across the sea, a man laughed triumphantly at the Republic's defeat, which had been brought on by the Netherlanders themselves; it was Charles II of England, the most clever and purposeful opponent of the fallen statesman's policy of freedom.

But Jan de Witt's dismissal did not yet signify the end of his tragedy. The frightful last act, perhaps the deepest and most horrible degradation to which any people in modern history had ever succumbed, was still to come. The mob's hatred of the man, and the poisoning of human emotions had gone too far for them to be satisfied with this outcome. The noise of murderous slogans and curses echoed into the windows of the administrators and the friends of Jan de Witt. They counselled him to escape. But why should Jan de Witt flee? He had suffered worse things than death; he had buried his noblest hopes and his whole life's work. Death could come when it wished; he was not afraid. But it came in such an abominable and hideous form, that the memory of this one outrage was almost as painful and lasting as that of the martyrdom of the Spanish Inquisition.

A trial had been started against Cornelius de Witt, who had been accused of having fostered an attempt on the life of the Prince of Orange. The judges knew that the brother of the Grand Pensionary of Holland was innocent, but they did not dare to exonerate him. Without any reason being offered, he was condemned to be exiled from Holland and to be stripped of all his offices and dignities. When Jan de Witt learned of his brother's fate, he abandoned all caution and hurried to the prison, which was closely surrounded by an armed and incited mob. The way to his brother proved to be—as Jan de Witt was soon to realize—the way to death for both of them.

The 20th of August, 1672, witnessed on the streets of the Hague the most terrible outburst of brutal fury, the most shameless blood orgy that this peaceful nation had ever known. Jan de Witt, even now, could not realize how incensed the mob was. He still had confidence in the weight of his words and in the power of his gaze. His one desire was to free his brother from prison. Taking him by the hand, he stepped out into the open, where the air was filled with the screams of the mob. Steadily and firmly, he looked into the eyes of his murderers, and cried out into the midst of the crowd, "Worthy citizens, what is the meaning of this?" Some fell back before the power of his gaze and the dignity of his manner; others brazenly shouted the familiar accusations at him. At this, for the first and only time, Jan de Witt decided to answer the charges with the only answer he could possibly give that was worthy of this hour and of himself: "If everyone had acted as I have, not a city in the land would now be in

French hands!" At this, the first blows fell on Cornelius. After attempting to advance through the crowd, Jan de Witt suddenly fell to the ground, struck by a pistol bullet. A scream of murderous frenzy, exultant with the now released lust for murder, rang out over the Square. The mob pounced upon the brothers, murdered them, tore off their clothes, hanged the dead bodies on a gallows, cut them to ribbons and fought over pieces of the dead men's flesh. The reaction to a scene of this sort can only be the numbness of horror or the orgiastic insensibility of the murderers.

After the bloody act had been perpetrated and normality had returned to the city, people realized that this assassination was the most dreadful humiliation that their proud nation had ever experienced. Voices arose that demanded judgment and atonement for this crime. But it was never atoned; no one had the courage to recall to memory the tragedy of that August day. The Parliament did not speak; and the Prince of Orange, more powerful now than ever before, was also silent. After a long time, the Parliament finally decided to examine Jan de Witt's documents in order to check upon the accusations of his enemies. The result of this examination made them ashamed. "What should we have found? Nothing but honesty!" And slowly, there arose in the consciousness of posterity the personality of a murdered leader who, rising above the whims and passions of his times by his clear, steady insight and deep faith, had beheld a vision of the future in which the free, peaceful and gentle spirit of reason was to build a home for all mankind.

The night after the assassination, a cry echoed forth in the capital of the Republic, a different cry from that of the piercing, horrifying one of murderous frenzy. It was an isolated cry issuing from a mouth that, more than any other, was accustomed to silence and knew how to suppress every expression of profound emotion. In the house on the Paviljoensgracht, a cry arose from a solitary man, a man who had understood Jan de Witt better than all the others, the cry of Baruch Spinoza; and in the hoarse, dreadful sound that issued forth from his lips, already overshadowed by death, was expressed the deep and terrible pain of an outraged soul, the distress of one who had also felt the degradation of being spurned and slandered merely because he had desired to help mankind and to live for the love of God. When consciousness again returned to Spinoza, he took a sheet of paper and wrote upon it two words that expressed his wrath, and his curse upon that day: *ultimi barbarorum*. He wished to go out and face the raging mob, to nail this paper upon a wall at the scene of the murder. And if they would then tear him to pieces too, it would be good and honorable for him to be allowed to die as Jan de Witt had died.

But Spinoza's landlord realized the senselessness of such an act—it would have been a superfluous sacrifice—and he locked the door to prevent the philosopher from going out. Spinoza returned to his room, and burying his grief-stricken face in his arms, wept long and silently at the horror of that ill-fated day.

These are the horrendous doctrines and frightful errors which this unsavory Jewish philosophus, begging the reader's indulgence, defæcated into the world.

"Introduction to Four New Philosophers"
—COETHEN, 1702

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Building of the Temple

I

SPINOZA came to Voorburg in the year 1663 and remained in this village for six years. His rural solitude was only interrupted by brief sojourns in the Hague, in Amsterdam and in other Netherlands cities. From Voorburg he could be an observer of the stormy times. It was as if he were looking out of his quiet life through a hole in the wall, over into the confusion, passions and struggles that menaced the freedom of the country. His home was quite near the Hague, and yet far enough away for him to be beyond the reach of its tumult. Reports concerning the fortunate success of the Grand Pensionary's policies, the House of Orange and its thirst for power, and the menace of neighboring countries, came to him as if from afar. It was like receiving news from a foreign land. But overwhelming events affect everyone whose mind is engrossed in the problems of his century. As though by a mysterious force, Spinoza had been borne into the very

center of disturbance during the catastrophic year of 1672 in the Hague. His solitude had been interrupted by an historical hour. He had been compelled to be a horrified spectator at a great disaster.

But in Voorburg, in the house of Daniel Tydemann, the painter, Spinoza found the peace and solitude he had not been able to find the past few years in Rhynsburg. He lived as if on a small island, from whence, to be sure, he could clearly see the shores of the mainland; but very seldom did a ship cross over. To Henry Oldenburg he complained of the slowness of the post. "That is the disadvantage of living in the country, I rarely receive a letter when it is due. Only by chance does a rare opportunity bring it to me. Often a week or two passes before I receive it." And yet, in spite of this, his country life did not remain undisturbed for long. Visitors came from the outside, either for the sake of friendship or only out of curiosity, to see and speak with a man, who for some was the greatest thinker, and for others, the greatest monster of the century. Many were prompted by a simple desire to be taught by him, to receive illumination in the darkness of that chaotic century. Others even came for instruction in the true faith. In spite of the curse of the Synagogue, in spite of his heresy and the consequent persecution, Spinoza was still the great, learned rabbi in their eyes, far surpassing all Christian theologians in knowledge of the Bible. He was the most profound scholar of the Hebrew language since the death of Saul Levi Morteira and Manasseh ben Israel. Thus, they made pilgrimages to the place of his quiet abode, invading the workshop of the

lens grinder, and the hours that really belonged to the study and the construction of his system. Old acquaintances of his youthful years in Amsterdam at the time of sectarian fanaticism came to Voorburg to receive instruction or to engage in controversy. Then there was the "sculptor," the same disputatious character of the study hours in the Synagogue. He wanted Spinoza to teach him the history of the books of the Prophets. And there were also many who came from foreign lands, and who were of an entirely different mentality from Spinoza. One of these was the French Field Marshal, Charles de St-Denis, Seigneur de St. Evremont, a soldier and free-thinker, who had been exiled from his native land, and who was a zealous student of the new science and philosophy. How different a world this General brought with him from his own past into the modest and yet vast world of the philosopher. He was very much impressed with Spinoza, whom he described as a man of medium size and agreeable features. "His knowledge, his modesty and his altruism are the reasons why all intellectual persons living in the Hague esteemed and visited him." However, later on, he was shocked by the views that Spinoza's posthumous writings revealed.

The downfall of Adriaan Koerbagh, who was Spinoza's close friend and an ardent adherent of his philosophy, came to him as a prelude to Jan de Witt's tragedy and as a warning not to put too much trust in the power of freedom. This passionate fighter for the spirit of progress and of freedom had been roused to anger by some obsolete laws and certain medical abuses. Above all, however, Adriaan

Koerbagh had taken his stand as a severe critic of the Calvinist Church, which he fiercely and intemperately attacked for its dogma and teachings, its metaphysics and biblical interpretations, using Spinoza's ideas as caustic weapons. The liberal thinking of Adriaan Koerbagh was the expression of a deeply emotional rebel, who was also somewhat of an eccentric. His heresy was bound to lead to accusations and persecutions. This animus was also directed against his brother Johannes, who was under suspicion of being the co-writer of his revolutionary pamphlets. Johannes Koerbagh was deprived of his office as a preacher. Although he retained his freedom, it merely meant unrest and an early death for him. Against Adriaan, however, in the year 1668, all the hatred and might of the Inquisition was once again demonstrated. He spent a cruel period of imprisonment, at the end of which death came as a release. Adriaan Koerbagh was considered one of Spinoza's adherents. He acknowledged this before the tribunal in Amsterdam. The kind of war which he waged, however, and the crude and ugly form of his enmity to the Church, were contemptible and foreign to Spinoza. But the fact that merely because of his views, a man should be incessantly tormented, and be stamped as a criminal by the State, and be expelled, that was the sign of a dangerous constellation into which the free spirit of this country had now entered.

But neither now nor ever did anything happen in the outside world that could divert Spinoza from his creative work. The years spent in Voorburg were devoted, above all, to his "Ethics" and his "Tractatus Theologico-

Politicus," the works which more than any others, transmitted his philosophy to future generations. One who, like Spinoza, has learned to plan and to look far ahead, does not have to be lost in the events and perils of his environment; and one who has fashioned his thoughts so comprehensively and truly, does not have to be subject to everyday experiences. During his entire life, Spinoza was intimately associated with his era; for the trend of his thought was also characteristic of his era, which was engaged in a struggle with the old world and in an effort to give birth to a new one. His thinking, therefore, was not beyond his times; and although it came from above, from eternal ideas it penetrated deeply into his times and into the human soul. Hence, for Spinoza, time and eternity were no more contradictory than theory and practice or thinking and politics.

It is therefore, just as great an error to think of Spinoza as a philosopher secluded from the world, as to think of him as a politician. He constructed a sublime model of God; and as God was Nature, and Nature was the substance of all life, so the state and the laws also were the logical consequence of God. Indeed, the model would be defective, it would be inadequate and impotent if it did not also represent the collective life of humanity in its various forms. The State was responsible for the peace and freedom of the individual, but the State must also serve the spirit of reason. This Spinozistic idea resolved the great antithesis of the Baroque period between the individualistic idea of freedom and the idea of the absolute power of the State. "The purpose of the state

is freedom." The devotion to human society, to the idea of the community achieves the real freedom of the individual. And, on the other hand, the rigid, inflexible omnipotence of the State becomes elastic and ennobled, because it is made subservient to the idea of freedom. All the meridians of individual life lead to the poles of the divine Being. As each person and each hour is bound to God, so our social existence is bound to the State, to the power of its laws, and to its reasonable ordinances. Human nature requires this tie to the State, and demands a ruling power which shall stand for justice. But "the State, is more justified when it is based on reason and acts in accordance with it." That indicates its responsibility toward its citizens, and their responsibility toward the State. This notion implies obligation and freedom at one and the same time; it implies command and service, goal and motive. For politics, this conception opens a way that leads beyond the cares of the day to "sublimity." To attain this is always "just as difficult as it is rare."

Jan de Witt and Spinoza had the identical idea of a state which would combine might with right, and freedom with reason. The statesman pursued this idea through his association with the Netherlands freedom movement, which his father had already served, and on the plane of the events of his restless times. For the philosopher, this idea had to result from higher ideas in accordance with mathematical logic. Its place was on the timeless plane of thought. As a thinker, Spinoza did not descend into the practical struggle of everyday opinions or conflicts of will.

Faced with the wars and chaos of those years, Spinoza

yearned for the moment when "once the warriors will have become sated with blood, and will rest for a while to gather fresh strength . . . I am stirred neither to laughter nor to tears by this confusion, but rather to philosophizing and to the better observation of human nature." This confession, made to his friend, Henry Oldenburg, also disclosed Spinoza's conception of politics. Contemporary history also stimulated his philosophy; and his interpretation of events followed as much from reflection on ideas as from observation of human behavior.

In the spacious edifice of philosophy, the idea of the State has its definite place. From his window, Spinoza looked into the turmoil of the turbulent times as through the perfected view of his optical lenses. His will was not directed toward the practical change of conditions but only toward the truth of his thoughts. Spinoza was no politician, nor was he an interpreter of practical politics; but he was nevertheless close to the working forces in the life of the community and of the individual in that century of limitless growth.

Jan de Witt and Spinoza were close to each other in their way of thinking; they understood each other, for they both believed in the new scientific spirit of their century. And their opponents were also united into one camp. They were just as much adherents to the Orange idea of absolute power as to Calvinistic (and also Jewish) orthodoxy. Both of these men were opposed to the idea of the sanctity and infallibility of the State. They had no desire to see the great tension between the State and the individual resolved in the manner of Thomas Hobbes,

who allowed the individual to be swallowed up by the "Leviathan" State. For human life was too sacred for that, and freedom too precious a possession. "Freedom of spirit and strength of mind are the virtues of the individual; the virtue of the State is security." Perhaps Spinoza overlooked the fact that the institutions of State and society, like man, have their own life, flourishing, changing and dying in accordance with their own laws. A too rigid Rationalism did not yet acknowledge this "individual character of the present," of which Wilhelm von Humboldt once spoke. This individuality is an effective opponent of reason whose designs receive "form and modification from the very object upon which they are founded."

Spinoza's rustic retreat in Voorburg witnessed the arrival of visitors, the carrying on of discussions and various signs of respect as well as of hatred; but the further his labors on the main work progressed, the more Spinoza realized how alone he really was. In the circle of his friends, there remained only a single person who was more than a pupil or an adherent. It was Simon de Vries, the "highly learned youth," who was the most faithful of the faithful. During his illness, he had laid all his possessions at Spinoza's feet, and had finally been satisfied with the promise that the philosopher would accept a small income as an inheritance. Spinoza never thought that his promise was to be realized so soon. But in the year 1667, Simon de Vries died. He left Spinoza with the feeling that now no one in the world was left to mourn his own death any more than that of any stranger; and some might even rejoice that a poisonous monster was no more.

Spinoza often thought of his dead friend, and he realized how cold and cheerless his environment would be from now on. The vast world around him was seething with the heat of passion, but Spinoza was now destined to be cold and alone.

In spite of his growing renown and the number of his adherents, Spinoza was quite alone with his thoughts. At first, it was generally believed that, in view of the fact that he had been assailed by the orthodox, he must belong in the camp of the Collegiants, or to some other sect of free-thinkers. But when he left Rhynsburg, it became clear that he had never bound himself to the sect of that village. As a result, he was called an atheist, an epithet which must have pained him beyond measure, because God was the highest principle of his philosophy, and because his system drew all its living power from the one magical source of religion. Furthermore, his own conduct of life was that of a humble servant of God. In science also, it was impossible to link Spinoza with any definite camp. Some thought that he was a Cartesian. To be sure, he saw the great intellectual enlightenment which Descartes had brought into this century; he saw the liberation from the fetters of Scholasticism and the greatness and fruitfulness of his knowledge. But Spinoza was no partisan of Descartes, nor his pupil; indeed, in many matters he was even his critic. Under the flag of Descartes, the new knowledge, released from the fetters of theology, had spread especially in the Netherlands. Even in the universities, the number of adherents to this philosophy had constantly increased. In the camp of the Cartesians were Frans von

Schooten, Jan de Raei, Geulincz and many others. There were also physicians and jurists as well as three free-thinking theologians, Heidanus, Coccejus and Hoornbeck. Of these, Heidanus had known Descartes personally when the philosopher had lived in Holland. At that time, Spinoza was still a child; he had scarcely heard of the great Frenchman's name when the news of his death came from Stockholm. Spinoza was the most profound authority on Descartes' philosophy, and when he was asked for an introduction into the newest philosophy, other than his own, he would proceed to explain Descartes' theories.

Thus, while still in Rhynsburg, he had dictated the principal features of the Cartesian philosophy to his pupil and neighbor, Johannes Casearius, to whom he did not wish to impart his own ideas. His friends persuaded him to complete these notes and to publish them. "I gave them my consent, but with the understanding that one of them should, in my presence, improve the style somewhat and add a preface, in which it should be brought to the reader's attention that not everything contained in the publication represented my own point of view, since as can be demonstrated by various examples, I had explicitly declared the contrary of what was written in it."

This work was undertaken by a friend, Dr. Lodewijk Meyer, a physician, writer and later, a theater director, who became the editor of this one and only book, on the title page of which stood the name, Benedictus de Spinoza. The essay was entitled, "Principles of Descartes Geometrically Demonstrated." Intended for educational purposes, it was to serve "for general use" and for the study of "the

true philosophy." The book appeared in the Spring of 1663, and was published by Jan Rieuwertz in Amsterdam. Rieuwertz was the publisher of Cartesianism in Holland. He was also the center of all the expressions and efforts of the free-thinkers, whose many passionate discussions were inimical to the spirit of theology, and were denounced by the potentates of the Church. Besides Meyer's preface, the book was also accompanied by a Latin poem attributed to Johannes Bouwmeester, Spinoza's friend, and a physician and translator of Arabic works. The poem ended with these laudatory lines:

Until now an example has been wanting of what he could accomplish.
May this little book not fail to provide this example,
So that as much as Descartes may be obliged to Spinoza
So much may Spinoza be obliged to himself.

In this book Spinoza only wanted to be a teacher and an interpreter in the service of another thinker. Not only his personality, but his very thoughts must be effaced behind the work of the older philosopher. His unselfishness was so great and his pride so small, that he gladly stole the necessary time from his own investigations so as to complete this modest work. He had learned so much from Descartes, that he thankfully taught his wisdom, even though he had long ago outgrown it. In the Cartesian theory of knowledge, clearness and distinctness were the characteristics of truth. Spinoza's presentation was also clear and distinct. He developed the Cartesian principles in austere formulae and stark outlines "in geometric form." Although Descartes had already used Euclidian

geometry as a method for his philosophy, it was Spinoza who for the first time developed it logically and in all its aspects. Only if ideas were entirely compressed into the form of geometrical demonstration, if they had, as far as was possible, freed themselves from the ever personal, ever subjectively felt word, did actual deduction from scholarly knowledge begin for Spinoza. His innate inclination to suppress his own personality and to raise the truth to an absolute power beyond the experiences, dreams and passions of the individual, attained its realization by this method. If a pupil has once understood this essay on Descartes, he has advanced a good way along the road to a knowledge of philosophy. This was the sole intention of the "Principles of Descartes Geometrically Demonstrated." There would still be pleasure in the application of the new method, even if, in Spinoza's opinion, the work might occasionally be a hindrance to real knowledge because of its exhaustiveness, especially "when everything had to be grasped at a single glance, as when looking at a painting."

The booklet had been written in Latin, but in the following year, 1664, it was translated into Dutch by Pieter Balling. The first part explained Descartes' theory of knowledge and his metaphysics; the second (incomplete) his mechanics. The appendix contained the "Metaphysical Thoughts." "It discussed in brief the more difficult questions found in the general as well as in the specialized parts of the book with respect to existence and its conditions, God and His attributes, as well as the human spirit." This appendix was also Cartesian in the

trend of its thought, even if it was inclined to be somewhat independent as regards its prototype, at times even favoring the younger Scholastic philosophy. The entire work was the incidental attempt of a man who wished to show that he could also mold and form a different material from his own. Spinoza did not attach any great importance to this short composition. He prepared it for printing in two weeks' time. But his friends and the learned world were eager to obtain the small pamphlet. "To crown everything, comes your announcement that you have sent to press the first and second parts of the Principles of Descartes in the geometric manner, and your very generous offer to me of one or two copies of it." Thus Henry Oldenburg expressed his joy; and, at the same time, added these hopeful words: "For the rest, allow me to say that I can scarcely restrain my impatience at the fact that you should even now suppress those writings which you acknowledge as your own, especially in a Commonwealth that is so free that you are allowed to think what you like and to say what you think. I should like you to break through those barriers, especially when you can conceal your name and in that way place yourself beyond all chance of danger."

II

But was this country really so free that one could think and say whatever one desired? Never before had Spinoza had so great a desire to know the truth about those matters which stood in the center of public interest

and political life: matters pertaining to the state and to religion. From outside, the hubbub created by these questions found its way into the quiet of his Voorburg abode. His hearing had become sharply attuned to the clamor of the times, which for most people was only raucous noise, but which for him would have to disclose its hidden meaning. He observed the great struggles of power and of opinion, and he searched for their secrets. He saw the present not only from the point of view of the passing moment, but also in the light of the past and of eternity.

Once again, a procession of yesterdays returned to his mind: the study hours at the "Tree of Life," where he had bent his dark head over the Bible and the Talmud, the religious services in the Portuguese Synagogue, and the mysterious old Spanish way of life in the big Dutch city. He was linked to this past in many ways, but above all, because of language. Although he had now become accustomed to speak Dutch to his visitors, yet this harsh, broad idiom was not his favorite tongue. In a letter Spinoza confessed how closely he felt united with the Spanish language: "I would so much like to write in the language I was brought up to speak; I might then, perhaps, succeed better in expressing my thoughts." And although the external bridges to his childhood world had been abruptly destroyed, the Jewish spirit and the destiny of the Marranos remained alive in him. He had always refused to join the Christian Church or to belong to any sect. The memory of the spiritual world in which he had spent his childhood, and his struggle with the past, now streamed into the "Tractatus Theologico-Politicus."

The present condition of Jewry in the Netherlands was entirely different from what it had been in Spain. The Jews were permanently settled now; their new world was secure and completely constructed; their only wish was that everything should remain as it was. For this reason the Spanish Jews leaned toward conservatism in the internal strife of the land. They were in sympathy with Calvinist orthodoxy and the Orange party. In no other European country did they possess so much civil liberty as in the Republic of the Netherlands. Louis XIV found it disgusting that a Christian State should permit such good treatment to be meted out to the Jews. To the Dutch diplomat, Coenraad van Beuningen, he openly and bluntly asserted his surprise. The answer he received was representative of the times and characteristic of this Dutchman, who was a friend of Spinoza and was considered Jan de Witt's right hand man. "Is it not really a sign that God wishes the Jews to be tolerated on earth if He has not Himself destroyed them? And, as they must live somewhere, and as they have been banished from all lands, it can at least not be impious that Amsterdam should shelter them."

Into Amsterdam Jewry, as into all other Jewish communities, a deep and soul-stirring unrest had penetrated as a consequence of the proclamation of an Eastern Messiah. In the streets and in the houses, groups formed and discussed the latest reports about Sabbatai Zevi. They wondered whether he were really the Messiah. The rumors penetrated into the Dutch quarters also, and beyond the country's boundaries. In London, too, the legend of

the new Messiah came to be known. People were eager to get all the news that came from Smyrna and from Constantinople. They did not know whether to laugh at this Jewish saint or whether to take him seriously. But the times were too fantastic; they were disturbed by war and pestilence and convulsed by strange superstitions and extraordinary tidings. Even scholars took the tale of the Jewish Messiah and the promise of a new Jewish State seriously, and were eager to know more about it.

Henry Oldenburg also shared this wish, but to whom could he turn for information? He knew that all the news about this new religious adventure was centered in the Jewish quarter in Amsterdam. He therefore had to send out a feeler in this direction. Thus he conceived the idea of asking for details from Spinoza, whom he considered a Jew in spite of everything. "But to return to politics. There is a rumor here on everyone's lips that the Jews, who have been dispersed for more than two thousand years, are to return to their country. Few in this place believe it, but many desire it. Will you tell your friend what you hear and think about the matter? For my part I cannot put any confidence in this news as long as it is not reported by trustworthy men from the City of Constantinople, which is concerned in this most of all. I should like to know what the Jews in Amsterdam have heard about the matter, and how they are affected by such an important announcement which, if it were true, would seem to bring a crisis upon the whole world." And in a similar vein, Henry Oldenburg also wrote to Robert Boyle.

For the first time since he had been excommunicated, Spinoza was addressed by his friends as an Amsterdam Jew; at least Oldenburg took it for granted that his friend must be in relationship with his old community at a time when such a world-stirring affair must deeply affect all Jewish souls. We do not know Spinoza's answer. But perhaps it is contained in that part of the "Theological-Political Treatise" in which, many years after the false Messiah's failure, he devoutly spoke of a Jewish future: "I would go so far as to believe that, if the principles of their religion have not enfeebled their minds, and if the occasion presents itself amid the changes to which human affairs are so liable, they may even raise up their empire anew, and God may yet elect them a second time."

Baruch Spinoza was still a part of the people whose zealous teachers had repudiated him ten years before. Oldenburg was quite right in addressing his question to him. But Spinoza did not lend credence to the false Messiah. This legend had arisen out of the same confusion in the people's souls as once the many flowery fables of the Cabala. But his imagination was greatly impressed by the sight of thousands of young and old people who, from every corner of the earth, out of poverty or wealth, despair or contentment, were again setting out upon their way in order to provide their lives and their faith with a new home. Spinoza could picture them clearly, as they stood on the streets of Amsterdam, excitedly discussing the new Messianic legend. He was no longer angry with them for having cursed him. They were people like all the

He longed for peace. Spinoza also zealously collected all the news from the theater of war. There was as yet no promise of peace.

In May of 1665, the Netherlands' fleet attempted an attack on the English coast in order to force a decision. The Grand Pensionary had insisted on an energetic advance, for the people were eager for victory. Spinoza had also noticed the restlessness of the public mood. To his friend, John Bouwmeester, he wrote in June, 1665, "The populace does not cease to be apprehensive of all manner of evil, nor can anyone find a reason why the fleet doesn't sail. Indeed, the whole matter seems disquieting. I fear that our commanders wish to be too wise and cautious. But the course of events will finally show what they have in mind and what they will attempt. May the gods favor their plans."

The gods did not favor them, for the sea engagement at Lowestoff resulted in a terrible defeat for the Netherlands. Despite this, at the end of a few weeks Jan de Witt ordered a second battle. His plan was known in England, and the coming events were awaited. In desperation, Oldenburg wrote to Spinoza: "Here we are daily expecting news of a second naval battle unless, perhaps, your fleet has again retired into port. The courage with which your men fight, according to your description, is brutish not human. For obviously, if men acted under the guidance of reason they would not tear each other to pieces. But why do I complain? There will be wickedness as long as there are men. However, wickedness can be counterbalanced by the intervention of better elements." The

Dutch fleet finally did come out, and Jan de Witt himself was on board the flagship. But a storm at sea prevented an engagement between the enemies. And the hope for peace between the two countries was not realized.

For England, the war created still another terrible consequence. Pestilence broke out, invading the homes and streets, and causing almost greater sacrifice of life than the war at sea. Under such dire conditions, an intellectual life was no longer possible. The members of the Royal Society abandoned London. The end of the epidemic was awaited with the same impatience as the end of the war. An "Iliad of Disaster," wrote Oldenburg, describing this era of combat and pestilence which thrust all culture aside. How could research still continue under such circumstances? The peaceful community of learning was rudely and painfully disorganized. Scholars could no longer hold their learned conventions. Anyone who, in spite of all, still preserved his intellectual faith, was obliged to work alone, attempting to deny the existence of his sorry environment. The best members of the Royal Society acted thus, devoting themselves privately to their hydrostatic, anatomical and mechanical experiments. Oldenburg kept Spinoza informed of these by letters which, in this time of war, could be delivered only by intermediaries. Slowly, affairs in the English world became more cheerful as the pestilence receded and at least this internal affliction came to an end. The prospect that the Royal Society would again convene was, in Oldenburg's opinion, also the prospect that a peaceful spiritual existence would be renewed.

But pestilence fought not only on the side of the Netherlands in this war, but just as much against her. It also raged in the Dutch cities, threatening above all, the weak, unprotected lives of the children and the sick. Had Spinoza been living in a city at that time, he would certainly have succumbed to the epidemic. But in Voorburg, in the open country of the Netherlands plains, the air was pure and wholesome. There the pestilence did not spread, and Spinoza was better protected from it than he could have been anywhere else in the land. However, his old disease made increasing inroads upon his health. He realized its terrible warning. His dry cough, although subdued and weak, was a loud summons which resounded just as frighteningly as the cannon at sea. But hours came when the disease remained dormant. Spinoza was grateful for these hours, and he regained hope.

On bad days, however, fever would attack him, casting him into fear and perspiration and shaking his small, childish, delicate body into a state between freezing and burning. A blood letting as well as strict diet would bring relief. A preparation of roses brought some relief to his wasted lungs. Spinoza was aware of his condition and also knew the remedies which, up to now, had helped him overcome his most terrible days. He knew that he must not allow his illness to dominate his consciousness, for then he would be lost. He struggled against the disease, seeking to impose his will even upon death itself. Then it would be possible to live on a while longer. Such an existence was arduous; it could not be anything else but work. All his limited strength was marshalled in defiance of death. The

attacks were frightful in themselves, but they were all the more so because Spinoza had to suffer them alone. He was dependent upon the help of strangers; no one sat at his bedside who really belonged to him or to his life. But when once he had conquered the seizure, it seemed to him as though he had become younger and more cheerful. The expression on his sallow face and in his large dark eyes became quite boyish. Before his searching mind would appear extraordinary associations of ideas which, through his conquest of death, provided him with new vital energy. He was always obliged to have the remedies for his illness at hand: on the one side bleeding, rose preserves and other medicaments, but on the other, the will to live and faith in his work.

Spinoza would often look out upon the quiet village and upon the summery Dutch plains beyond. The view was beautiful; it was a promise of his being able to continue living. It created courage, no matter how great his hardships. He would cling to the promise of the landscape and make it keep its word. His salvation could only be achieved by work. He who is on the track of the greatest questions of existence, who seizes their secrets and holds on to them with geometrical propositions and demonstrations, such a one does not die. The man who was to complete a work of this kind, could not die. That much was certain.

That was how Spinoza spent those years in Voorburg when he completed the major part of his "Ethics" and wrote the "Theological-Political Treatise," at the same time going through the most dreadful sickness and pro-

ducing the greatest amount of creative work. As early as March, 1665, a substantial part of his principal work seems to have been ready; for in a letter to Willem van Blyenbergh, in which Spinoza explained, point by point, his idea of an honest man, he referred clearly to the findings of his "Ethics"—"which had not as yet been published." Even though he maintained a spiritual communion with his friends in the outside world, his correspondence with Blyenbergh was disturbing. He was a simpleton, narrow-minded and malicious. He tried to refute philosophical knowledge with threadbare theological arguments. In no one had Spinoza been so much mistaken as in him. He wished to terminate this friendship, which "had not turned out as expected."

In the Spring of 1665, the "Ethics" was almost completed. The nearer Spinoza came to the end of his main work, the more devotedly, zealously and feverishly he toiled. It was like working in the afternoon of a lifetime; the light was growing dimmer, his strength weaker. In twilight such as this, all his thoughts had to be sharpened, diamond-like, in order to stand out from the troubled atmosphere that this desperately sick human being breathed. Even now philosophy was not to bring any consolation to his fate; but the geometrical method, in its sober, lucid way, was to create an objective world which the philosopher could turn in his hand like a perfect globe, and which was to convince him of his ever increasing productive power. He who had always desired to serve truth only, and by this service be able to rise above all suffering and experiences, could now celebrate in a com-

pletely objective creation the highest victory of self-control and the liberation from all torments and afflictions to which the bodies and the souls of other men succumb. In any case, the great work had to be completed; as long as Spinoza worked, his dying was delayed. The space of life was darkening. The bright globe which he held in his hand would have to give light. It was already evening.

Suddenly, Spinoza halted his work on the "Ethics." He said no more about its publication. He pushed the manuscript aside like a heap of documents in a postponed lawsuit. Yes, Spinoza put aside eternity, in spite of the fact that his life was dependent on it alone; and he stretched out his hand to the affairs of the present that forced themselves forward, more clamorous, more vehement and imperious than ever. The great building of the temple—its walls and pillars were already standing; only the roof was missing—had to wait for a while. The calculations and construction, the piling up of the even stones, the cementing with mortar, the incessant hammering and building were suddenly stopped. After two years of almost unbroken labor, Spinoza's joy in the great philosophical edifice was gone. Every glance into the outer world revealed rebellion, war and a death-dance of human passions which no reasoning seemed to govern. His work in building the temple had given Spinoza new strength; his sharp, clear eyes had looked into life's restless face. Now he also wished to discover the truth in the struggle of the present and to fight for the rights of God and for the rights of moral reason. Obeying the law of contrast, he was determined to leave his abstract heaven and to enter

into the earthly distress of mankind. Philosophical wisdom could bring help in the struggles of states and churches, which were now exacting daily sacrifices of life and liberty. There were so many lies, impossible in the sharp light of the intellect, that were destroying peace! Spinoza felt that he must step into the frightened world of men. In his hands he held love and understanding.

Only the events of those agitated times could explain the fact that Spinoza interrupted his work on his "Ethics" to write his "Theological-Political Treatise" during the following few years. The problem of this work was about the same as that of contemporary history. The State and the Church were fighting for their power and also for the achievement of their mission in a changing world. Wars were being waged; false Messiahs and prophets arose; mass migrations were beginning; the prisons were overflowing; inquisitional tribunals were instituted; pamphlets incited the mob; God and man were reviled—and all these confused doings took place on account of a clash between new and old ideas. Contempt for unfamiliar opinions took on ugly and barbaric forms. Many years before, a Calvinist, Count Chatillon, had had the Host thrown to his horses for fodder in order to show his contempt for Catholic ritual. Even now, in spite of the end of the great religious war, Catholics and Reformists were still fighting each other. The vast multitude of sects was at war with the Calvinist Church; but the sects also warred against each other, and considered the differences between theological interpretations to be of momentous concern both to human as well as to Divine honor. This strife over

religion closely resembled, in all its forms and expedients, the war for power of the political parties. Where, then, could there be any real, living veneration of God if the very words of Scripture were used as weapons by one faction against the other?

Pestilence in the land and war with England were apparently not enough to complete the unrest and unhappiness of the Republic. The ambition and the dogmatic fury of the Calvinist Church in its war against the sects and dissidents, even extended to antagonism against the authority of the State, because the Church hated and wished to destroy the freedom-loving spirit of Jan de Witt and the Freedom Party. The Grand Pensionary had other things to trouble him in those years besides the malicious machinations of the preachers. However, when the attacks from the Sunday pulpits against the Government became more and more violent, he decided to take energetic steps against this theological rebellion. (Dismissals from office and stopping of the preacher's salaries were the consequences of this struggle between Church and State.) But the poisonous seed which had been sown in the houses of God blossomed, and it is certain that the clergy also had its part in the tragedy of Jan de Witt.

The sectarians, those quiet and fervent searchers after God, were described by Calvinist preachers as "servants of the devil." The Parliament was called upon to convict them and, incited by the clergy, became so convinced of their danger that innumerable simple folk were forced to languish in prison for the sake of their faith. In this religious war Jan de Witt desired nothing more than

peace and harmony among the populace. With his strict regulations he desired not only to reestablish religious peace, but also to avoid political consequences, because the attacks on his policy of tolerance toward the Church also meant an attack on his system of governing.

In the midst of this struggle the case of the brothers Koerbagh came into prominence. It showed more than ever the threat against the freedom of the country, and the real spirit of this newly formed inquisition. To many, the punishment of Adriaan Koerbagh seemed too light; begrudgingly they remembered the Spanish Inquisition and the *autos-da-fé*. A contemporary bit of doggerel expressed the general sentiment thus:

Having penned thy cursed screed,
Thou art fortunate indeed
'Twas Amsterdam that jailed thee.
Had they taken thee in Spain
Or Italy forsooth, 'tis plain
They straightway would have hanged thee!

At about this time, Jan Pietersz, the sculptor, died an obscure and inglorious death. Of all the sectarians he had been the most disputatious spirit and the most singular character.

In these struggles, freedom of thought was also threatened. The State, the Church and the sects were not only fighting for their convictions and their authority; they were combatting the right to freedom of expression. The decision between the warring factions also meant the decision between the philosophic truth and its secular distortions. Religion and State were not isolated powers but

belonged to the ages and were derived from God. Thus Spinoza observed the strife of his embattled country. He had to take a stand; he had to understand, to clarify, teach and help. Out of this necessity originated the "Theological-Political Treatise," the only work with which Spinoza planned to influence public life. For this reason he was interested in its speedy publication. In 1670 the "Treatise" was published anonymously by Jan Rieuwertsz. The publication of this work was a dangerous matter because of the enormous power which the theologians still possessed. But Spinoza was sure of the protection of Jan de Witt, the Grand Pensionary.

Spinoza clearly explained the object of the "Treatise" to Oldenburg. "I am now writing a Treatise about my interpretation of Scripture. I am impelled to do this for the following reasons: (1) The prejudices of the theologians: for I know that these are among the chief obstacles which prevent men from directing their minds to philosophy; and therefore I dedicate myself to the task of exposing them and removing them from the minds of the more intelligent. (2) The opinion entertained of me by the common people, who incessantly and falsely accuse me of atheism: I feel obliged to avert this accusation as far as it is possible to do so. (3) The freedom to engage in philosophical inquiry and to say what we think: this I desire to vindicate in every way, for in this country it is suppressed in every possible way through the excessive authority and impudence of the preachers."

Thus this Treatise was the political manifesto of an unpolitical man who saw the menace against the most

precious achievement of the century: the freedom of thought and conscience. In the war for power among the religious factions, this work was not intended to represent the views of any one faction. It was opposed to and superior to all groups, pitting the freedom of philosophical knowledge against the illiberality of dogmatic bondage. Even with regard to the State, no matter how close to Spinoza's ideal the republican Netherlands might have been, this Treatise pleaded for the freedom of philosophical ideas. Objective in its exposition and proofs, the book was filled with an undercurrent of indignation directed against the confused times and the fabulous claims of church dogma. It launched this most profound indignation against all obscurantists and against the misled masses, asking, "What have you done with God?"

This was the actual charge made by the "Theological-Political Treatise." The apostate Jew, the despised "atheist," the solitary thinker of Voorburg levied this most grievous religious charge against the times. He challenged the ecclesiastical powers. Let them meditate on the result of their superstitions and their measureless ambition for power. "What have you done with God?" Spinoza demanded no answer; he merely wanted them to reflect. But those to whom this challenge struck home assailed him furiously.

III

"And I shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live." Spinoza recalled these words of Ezekiel; but the people

were bound by superstition. They were helpless and impatient in those hard times when happiness was so rare, and distress and death so common. "When in adversity they know not where to turn, but beg and pray for counsel from every passer-by. No plan is then too futile, too absurd, or too fatuous for their adoption." There was a desire for insecurity where only security might have helped. Indeed, the people had lost courage and confidence; they were afraid of their own liberty. And this fear, more than anything else, was the cause of superstition, for its roots are not in the intellect, but only in the emotions. Just as they dragged their disease-ridden bodies to quack doctors because they did not trust the science of real physicians, so did they betake their spiritual unrest to a faith in miracles, prophecies and superstitious practices. "For as the mass of mankind always remains at about the same level of misery, it never assents for long to any one remedy, but is always best pleased by a novelty which has not yet proved illusory. This element of inconstancy has been the cause of many terrible wars and revolutions." The masses were governed by manifold superstitions; they prayed to gods, sovereigns and false doctrines, or they cursed them when they were disillusioned. They fled from the freedom of their own thoughts and from reason. The worship of God remained only in the form of religious ritual, "which on the lips of the multitude seems rather adulation than adoration of the Deity." Worship had become a kind of court ceremonial in the presence of some mighty sovereign.

But how did this false piety jibe with liberty, reason

and the republican spirit? How could this superannuated, empty and hollow idea of God continue to exist in a century that was blessed with the investigations of a new, scientific spirit? Liberty does not signify a loss of God. An independently thinking, responsible person is nearer to God than is a slave. On account of his freedom and the happiness of his thoughts, he will pray to God and reverence Him, for he owes his liberty to His might. Spinoza knew that God was not only the remedy for our unhappiness and our distress, but also the goal of our happiness and our freedom. "Now, seeing that we have the rare fortune of living in a republic, where everyone's judgment is free and unshackled, where each may worship God as his conscience dictates, and where freedom is esteemed dear and precious beyond all things, I believed that I should be undertaking no ungrateful or unprofitable task in demonstrating that not only can such freedom be granted without prejudice to the public peace, but also that, without such freedom, piety cannot flourish nor can the public peace be secure. Such is the chief conclusion I seek to establish in this treatise; but in order to reach it, I must first point out the misconceptions which, like scars of our former bondage, still disfigure our notion of religion; and I must expose the false views about civil authority which many have most impudently advocated, endeavoring to turn the minds of the people, still prone to heathen superstition, away from their legitimate rulers, and so bring us again into slavery."

Even now, we daily observe people who parade their piety and their veneration of God before all eyes. They

call themselves Christians; they call themselves Jews. They proclaim the commandments of charity and of peace. The actions by which we recognize them, however, are fraught with hatred, lying, enmity and war, and are really profoundly hostile to the true spirit of religion, which they commend and highly praise with verbal eloquence. "Matters have long since come to such a pass, that one can only pronounce a man Christian, Turk, Jew, or Heathen, by his general appearance and attire, by his frequenting this or that place of worship, or employing the phraseology of a particular sect—as for their conduct of life, it is in all cases the same." In real religion, however, the question is not the cult and the doctrine, but only the conduct of life. And in this, there is no difference among the separate creeds. Official positions in the Church are often in great demand because they bring pecuniary benefits with them. Some become preachers because, like vain actors, they like to be admired as orators, or because they can, like politicians, attack people of a different faith. Thus the ancient and sacred religions have lapsed into empty husks, dishonored and condemned to weakness. People can help God only in so far as they express the truth. Off with the masks, with the theatrical vestments, and the pseudo-learned words, spoken only with the lips and not from the heart, words which disgrace God, although they pretend to proclaim His truth! Spinoza had no desire to make a plea for his own case; he did not wish to recall the infinite wrong to which he had been subjected, the slander and the malice which were being directed against him. No, he did not speak for himself.

As a matter of fact, he was not speaking for anyone. But the truth which his scholarly work was to serve also entered into everyday existence, and made its claims there. The inner distress of the times was as great as the outer one. Everyone who wished to serve truth and disdain lies was obliged to help. As a man who, by a mandate which is indifferent to him, is compelled to undertake a given task, so Spinoza, the gentlest and most peaceful man of his era, began to levy charges against the superstitions in religion, against the false interpretations of Holy Writ, against the enemies of reason and against the enslavement of the mind.

Had Spinoza suddenly become a pugnacious theologian? Did he want to give up philosophy in order to enter the flaming battlefield of daily strife? Had he become associated with the free-thinkers and the Christian sectarians hostile to the Church? No, he was none of these. He had become a politician for only a short time. He did not wage war in his own name, nor in the name of any faction. But in the chaos of opinions and stupidities, of misleading and false predictions, his was to be the voice of reason and liberty, of morality and the true knowledge of God. He did not force himself into this battle; rather it was forced upon him by the contemporary situation, which was untenable, unless the century was to be cheated out of its finest achievements. Justice, truth and liberty were in danger. Whoever was aware of this, and wanted to keep faith with his convictions, was obliged to speak out at this time; he was obliged to become a political combatant even if the laws and desires of his own person

pointed in a very different direction. In the last analysis, it was also a question of the State and of justice. Spinoza was an enthusiastic partisan of the natural rights which are born with us and follow the laws of reason. The State is the protector of justice and of liberty; it has the power to enforce the law. Yet it must never rob its citizens of their strength to the extent that they cease to be human beings. "It is necessary that subjects, either by tacit agreement or by social contract, retain a certain number of rights which cannot be taken from them without great danger to the State."

Liberty had engendered fear in the people. They took refuge in superstition and uncertainty. They did not trust themselves to be able to make the right use of the wonderful power of freedom. They were an obstacle to themselves, and they built a wall of prejudice to shut out the paradise of a new era. "I am aware that in the mind of the masses superstition is no less deeply rooted than fear." Basically, both superstition and fear are really one and the same thing; they are the two sides of the discouragement and weakness of people who are not equal to their tasks. The battle of the parties and churches was not only one for power, but also an evasion and flight, or the realization of a new historical situation. Spinoza did not take sides in the struggle between the liberal Regents and the House of Orange, and their respective advocates. And yet, in a sense he did take sides, since he spoke against the fear and superstition of the people and represented the demands for freedom of the intellect. He also adopted a stand in favor of Jan de Witt's government. Spinoza

knew that there was nothing stated in the "Theological-Political Treatise" which, as he wrote, "I am not ready to submit to the highest authority in my Fatherland for examination and judgment." But he also knew that he was human and might err. His humble task was to avoid error by expressing the truth in the spirit of the law of the Republic. It was not a task which he had sought, but one imposed upon him by existing circumstances.

"However, I sincerely endeavored to avoid error." In this confession the real intent of this manifesto is disclosed. Spinoza's conscientious service to truth also made it necessary for him to struggle against the dangers of the century, a struggle he carried on so earnestly and with such ethical fervor and painful conscientiousness that its consequences thrilled many future generations. It is impossible to interpret the Treatise only as a declaration of war against superstition and its freedom-hating defenders. But it is also impossible to disregard the importance of a decision which forced this loneliest of philosophers to oppose the enemies of reason and liberty. Spinoza merely desired to be the herald of a noble faith which he saw was in peril.

He knew that the rulers of the country were on his side. The people, however, would not understand him because they were the very ones who had succumbed to the dangers that this book revealed. Therefore, Spinoza addressed it to the philosophers, to those who understood, to the guardians of the century. It was also addressed to Jan de Witt, who exemplified the spirit of this work, and who deeply felt his responsibility toward his country, for

which he was ready to offer up his life. The preachers had fiercely attacked the Grand Pensionary for his ideas on liberty; they were the sharpest opponents of the religious interpretation and church policy which Spinoza's Treatise advocated. Jan de Witt knew this book intimately; it was as dear to him as if it had been his own confession. It was the great and profound manifesto in a war for a new and better era, toward which it was his vocation to lead the nation.

Jan de Witt often consulted the "Theological-Political Treatise," which was not inscribed with the name of the author. But he knew who had written it, and he knew also that no purer, more profound or more pious interpretation could be possible. It was remarkable how close were the thoughts of these two individuals, considering to what different worlds they belonged. The Grand Pensionary was not only the great statesman, the man of action and of war, but also the aristocrat, who was convinced that the masses could only be brought to a realization of the spirit of liberty when they were ruled by a few, and when their destiny remained in the firm hands of their leaders. More than anyone else, the Jew of Voorburg, the learned rabbi whose community had exiled him, the poor consumptive lens grinder was aware of these profound secrets of the times and the country. Jan de Witt placed this book with those that were at hand at every moment, with his Bible, his volumes of Grotius, Descartes, the most beloved liberators of political life, and the works of mathematicians and physicists. He knew that this new book was not only an authentic document of his reign, but also that

it was closely bound up with his destiny and even, if fate meant it to be so, with his destruction.

The main subject of the "Theological-Political Treatise" was the higher criticism of the Bible. Spinoza did not wish to minimize the importance of the Holy Scriptures, but he did wish to remove the Scriptures from an exceptional attitude toward the spirit of reason and of knowledge. He took a decisive step on the road to the liberation of philosophy and knowledge from theological domination, a step which many thinkers before Spinoza had already taken. To theological arrogance, which had excluded the revelations of God from human reason, he counterposed a critical examination of the biblical writings. It may seem surprising that these examinations extended only to the Old Testament. Was his book, therefore, an explanation for Judaism only and not for Christianity? By no means. However, Spinoza had been a Jewish theologian, and the reason he had been excommunicated from his paternal religion was based on Jewish theology. He probably thought it wiser not to challenge the hatred of the preachers and the political groups who were on their side. He did not want them to say that this expelled Jew was an enemy of Christian teachings, which he was not; nor was he an enemy of Judaism. It was not a question of specific creeds, but rather one of distinguishing between the free spirit of philosophy and knowledge, and theology. The noblest divine service is the true knowledge of God. "God demanded nothing from man but the knowledge of His justice and love, a knowledge which is not necessary for studies, but only for obedience."

Spinoza by no means wished to destroy theology, to which he owed such a large part of his knowledge. But the boundaries had to be clearly defined; that was a requirement for the spirit of science and for a liberal State. A partnership between theology and philosophy is impossible. "It remains for me to show that between faith or theology, and philosophy, there is no connection nor affinity. I think no one will dispute the fact who has knowledge of the aims and principles of the two subjects, for they are as wide apart as the poles. Philosophy has no end in view save truth; faith, as we have abundantly proved, looks for nothing but obedience and piety." The ultimate reason, however, for this fixed line of demarcation is a political one. The encroachment of theology into the sphere of free thinking also signifies a menace to the State and its actual foundation, freedom of thought. The last chapter of the Treatise proceeded to demonstrate "that in a free State every man may think what he likes, and say what he thinks."

This freedom, however, was violated daily, and menaced by the despotism of the preachers. Spinoza not only fought for freedom of thought, but he also furnished evidence that, without it, a free State and a free nation were impossible. In the same way as the churches, the governments also had the duty to afford liberty to each individual to say and to teach what he thought. The basic principles of the State and those of the mind must agree; and finally, every one must be convinced "that the ultimate aim of government is not to rule or restrain by fear, nor to exact obedience, but on the contrary, to free each man

from fear so that he may live in all possible security; in other words, to strengthen his natural right to exist and to work without injury to himself or others. The object of government is not to change men from rational beings into beasts or automatons, but rather to enable them to develop their minds and bodies in security, and to employ their reason unshackled, neither opposing each other in hatred, anger, or deceit nor regarding each other with animosity. In fact, the true aim of government is liberty."

Spinoza proclaimed liberty amid the strife of the theologians and the churches, the parties and the authorities; but only a few years later, the masses, still fearful and superstitious, began to hate and execrate this freedom. Spinoza demonstrated that those laws and customs which oppose our human reason should be abolished; and ironically enough, the creator of new, sensible laws was already lying, slain, upon the ground. But Spinoza also demonstrated the limits of the State and of the laws. The confusion of thought and the spiritual struggles of those extraordinarily agitated times could not be disposed of simply by passing laws. No greater misfortune for the State and for cultural life could be imagined than that people should be treated as criminals because of divergent opinions. Spinoza had personally experienced what it meant to incite the masses against individuals who have other ideas than theirs. The freedom of criticism is always the most precious good in a free State. Whoever lays hands on it menaces the State and must succumb.

The multitude was not to know who had written this powerful, clear-sighted manifesto for the cause of liberty.

Therefore the "Theological-Political Treatise" appeared without the name of its author. It had to appear in that way, for it was only an anonymous proclamation in the name of truth and against the superstition and fear of the times. The book was not meant to reach the masses, who could not, in any case, have understood the thoughts it expressed. Besides, it would only have incited them to rebellion, which was something Spinoza did not intend. For this reason also, it was published in Latin only. When Spinoza heard of a plan for a translation into Dutch, he was opposed to the idea, and demanded that the printing be stopped. The effect would only have been a complete suppression, which the Church would have imposed upon the State.

But wouldn't the storm break out anyway? Perhaps Spinoza himself did not suspect that by his spiritual combat he had also challenged that same bloodthirsty reality whose violent emotions he had tried to exorcise by reason. He smiled quietly. He had completed a political work, but he never wanted to be a politician again. He realized that he had made but one mistake, which was, that for four years he had been neglecting his philosophical work. He had merely wished to accomplish a task which circumstances of the moment had put before him. He had become a journalist, but now he wanted to be a philosopher again. However, the Treatise had outgrown its practical aim. Amid the struggles of parties and hostile factions it had proclaimed more strongly and more persuasively than ever before the demand and necessity for free belief and free thought. And so it had become one of the most

important works in the direction of enlightenment and human emancipation. It was not a manifesto against religion. On the contrary, it had its roots in a deeply and truly pious religious spirit. Spinoza did not turn against Christianity. Although Jesus was neither Prophet nor Messiah to him, he was nevertheless "the mouth of God." Nor did he turn to the mission of the Jewish people. They had been chosen by God, not for their kind of character, "but rather for their kind of society and destiny." This book dealt with freedom of belief and of the State, and with the problems of religion and of the times. These problems had nothing to do directly with his theoretical philosophy, but their moral earnestness and their religious fervor would increasingly penetrate his philosophical thinking.

Spinoza was neither a politician nor a theologian, but a religious man with a deep sense of responsibility. He was not a writer of polemics nor a fighter, but nevertheless he did not withdraw from his time and its needs. He flung his work into the faces of blind and narrow-minded demagogues. It is the monument of a mind which, out of its knowledge of eternal truth, was impelled to fight for the truth and purity of all lives and of all epochs. Two hundred years later in an entirely different world, when Gustave Flaubert read this Treatise for the first time, he confessed, "I was acquainted with Spinoza's 'Ethics' but not with the 'Tractatus Theologico-Politicus,' which amazes, dazzles and moves me to admiration. Good God! What a man! What a genius! Such knowledge and such a mind!"

Unfortunate and unripe fruit of an unfortunate and unripe mind, which had better been left in Cimmerian darkness than to have been drawn into the public light.

—JOHANN MUSAEUS, Professor of Theology at Jena, on the "Theological-Political Treatise," Jena, 1674

CHAPTER EIGHT

Years of Struggle

I

IT WAS in the Spring of 1670. Jan Rieuwertsz had just published the Treatise. His excursion into the struggles of the day now ended, Spinoza, much relieved, returned to his philosophical work. Had it, perhaps, been a mistake to have conjured up a struggle which was so entirely alien to his peaceful nature? Much valuable time had been lost; his studies claimed their rights more than ever. So Spinoza returned again to his important work. Above all, his nights were devoted to the completing of the work, since the grinding of the lenses demanded the bright light of the day.

Spinoza's greatest yearning now was for peace, peace in this warring and faction-ridden land, and peace between himself and the world. The following years saw the world move farther and farther away from him and, between it and himself, a cold wind arose, chill and numbing, like

a winter day which no warmth could penetrate. By the expression on many faces he sensed that erroneous ideas about the Treatise and the secret of its authorship had found their way to the people in low and devious ways. Children who had formerly approached the gentle, apostle-like figure and greeted him as they would a great teacher or priest, now avoided him. By their frightened faces he could see that their elders had forbidden them to greet him or show any signs of friendship.

Spinoza was again assailed by restlessness. Again he considered changing his residence. He was now only thirty-seven years old. If, however, instead of being reckoned from birth, life were to be reckoned from the date of death, then he would already have been an old man. He had no love for man in the mass, but only for certain individuals. In this, his sentiments were similar to the aristocratic views of those who ruled the Republic. Since he did not like the public in general, he also did not understand it. His judgments on an entire people were always incorrect and exaggerated, particularly when he judged the people to whom he himself belonged, Dutchmen and Jews. In both of these he saw an undifferentiated mass leading a prosaic, commonplace and base existence. He did not like to look into the faces of the multitude, which knows no intellectual life and judges God and the world by the standards of its own petty experiences. This explains the sharp criticism which Spinoza expressed, particularly with regard to the Jews.

On the faces of the multitude he read the same judgment which had once driven Uriel da Costa to despair:

"You are not a Jew; you are not a Christian; you are accursed!" Was the destiny of the Marranos once more being renewed? Because he had been on friendly terms with the Sectarians, they had taken him for a Christian. Now they knew how great their error had been, and they were beginning to avoid him. Yes, Spinoza wished to leave the village of Voorburg; he wished to go to a city. It was possible to live a solitary life in a large city if one so desired. In Voorburg he no longer had the care which his illness required. Margarita Karels, the wife of his landlord, Daniel Tydeman, had died; and the landlord himself was thinking of moving to the city. There Spinoza would more calmly and securely be able to endure the attacks being launched against his book and himself. Besides, he would be able to publish the Treatise in a Dutch translation. The Latin language had not been a lasting protection against misunderstanding. On the contrary, the slanders had become even worse, since many of the calumnies against Spinoza's ideas resulted only from hearsay, and thus, mountains of lies piled up against every word that he had written. The Treatise was only an excuse for the venomous obscurantists and enemies of the Republic to avenge themselves on the new spirit of the age. Jan Rieuwertsz had thought he could prevent the outburst of indignation by minor stratagems. On the title page of the Treatise he had given Hamburg as the city of its publication, and he had printed the name of Hermann Kuenrath as the publisher. This strategy, however, had not been successful. On the contrary, it had quickly carried the book into foreign countries, from whence the indigna-

tion was now brought back again across the Netherland frontier. Profane hands tore aside the curtain behin which Spinoza had desired to conceal himself, not from feeling of fear, but only to further the aim of his book Now they pointed their fingers at him as at a curse necromancer of ideas, while he continued his trade, quietl and undisturbed.

But the smile on his face had become increasingl fainter and more embittered. Confronted with the strug gle now again being waged against him, he felt that h could no longer go on. He had no desire for controvers with these petty, vulgar wretches. Nor did he wish t perish by their cowardice and baseness. He had no desir to risk his life, which—he knew it well—could not las much longer in any event. The Hague was situated quit close to Voorburg. It was the Capital of the Republic an also a center of free inquiry. It was the city where th Grand Pensionary lived, the man who understood an honored Spinoza, and who, in the brief pauses from hi work, took pleasure in studies and in research. The Gran Pensionary would protect him with a strong hand. H might even become Spinoza's friend, for he was the onl one in this whole land who was able to understand hir completely.

On the Veerkade, in the house of the widow Va Velen, Spinoza found a quiet home which pleased hin It consisted of only a single room, which was amply suff cient for his needs; and the landlady was kind and friendl to him. The preacher Johannes Colerus, Spinoza's bio rapher, occupied this same room a generation later: "M

study, in the rear of the house, situated on the second floor, had been his laboratory or workroom, where he slept and worked. There he often had his food brought to him, without seeing anybody for two or three days." In spite of the modesty of his way of living, Spinoza had to acknowledge, after a few months, that this household was much too expensive for him. He was forced to look for a new home, but he wanted to remain in the neighborhood of the old one; for this quarter of the city was tranquil and inhabited by quiet folk. In May of the year 1671, he moved into the house of Hendrik van der Spyck on the Paviljoensgracht. Van der Spyck was a house painter (he was also engaged in financial affairs), but his ambition went even further; he wished to create works of art in this country of great painting. A modest experiment along this line was his portrait of Spinoza. In Van der Spyck's house Spinoza lived on the top floor in a simple room which had a folding bed built into the wall. This was his last home. He looked at his small, threadbare chamber and at his hosts in the house. In them he saw the gentle peacefulness which he now needed; for Spinoza knew that in this room he would soon die.

His way of life was exactly the same in the city as it had been in the country. The simplicity of his diet was now a necessity for his health. His meals consisted of milk pap with butter, groats and raisins, and sometimes a mug of beer. It was more than enough. He needed little money for food and drink. He always refused invitations. It was better to eat his self-earned, simple bread than the choice delicacies of others. His savings went into the purchase

of books, for always, even as a boy, he had been filled with an incessant craving for knowledge. All the desires that ruled his solitude soared into strange, spiritual worlds. To these also belonged the world of art, to which he had been attracted since the time of his early paintings. And with the renewed strength which often precedes death, he was filled with a boundless desire to complete his own creative work, and at the same time, to become master of the scholarly knowledge of his century. The catalogue of his books, which by a happy coincidence has been handed down to us, is a proof of this.

The catalogue lists an especially large number of works on ancient Jewish lore. There are no better witnesses of the strong bond between him and the traditions of his tribe, than these many volumes in the Hebrew and Spanish language: the magnificent edition of the Buxtorf Bible, the commentaries of Abraham Ibn Ezra and Levi ben Gerson, Hebrew grammars and the principal work on the philosophy of the Jewish religion, the "Guide for the Perplexed," by Maimonides. Spinoza's school days at the "Tree of Life" are recalled to memory by the "Esperança de Israel" by his teacher, Manasseh ben Israel, and the customs of the Jewish holidays by a Passover Hagadah. Latin and Greek are represented by dictionaries and grammars. And above all there are the great and rich works of Spanish literature, all in the mother tongue that Spinoza loved better than any other language. Natural science is represented by works on astronomy, anatomy and physics. His own handicraft is recalled by reference works on optics and lens grinding. The list of philosophical

books is headed by the works of Aristotle, Bacon and Descartes. All of these books in a small bookcase of pine wood, an oak desk, a few small tables in the style of the period, an old trunk, his father's bed and a picture of his mother on the wall: this was the pathetically poor world in which Spinoza was now living, the world in which he would also die. The space between his bookcase and the turntable at which he sat to grind his lenses was the longest distance he now travelled. It comprised his entire world. He had no desire to tread any other road from now on.

The "Theological-Political Treatise" was undoubtedly the greatest manifesto of its era, the only one that retained its effect through the centuries. But in those stormy years other manifestoes appeared which were absorbed by the thirsty multitude as water by dry sand. Nothing speaks more for the purity and nobility of Spinoza's mind than a comparison of his Treatise with these manifestoes and pamphlets. One of them, which appeared under the pseudonym of "Homo Politicus," and was a coarse and illiterate attack upon the Church and its institutions, fell into Spinoza's hands. How the language of this booklet repelled him, and how unsympathetic its lack of idealistic faith and its base materialism was to him! "He praises simulation most highly, promising without giving, lying, perjury and many other things. When I had read this, the thought occurred to me of writing a little book indirectly against it, in which I would treat of the highest good, and then of the restless and wretched plight of those who are greedy for money and covet honors, and lastly, show by

clear arguments and many examples, that through the insatiable desire for honors and riches commonwealths must perish, and, indeed, have perished." With this kind of strife and such a materialistic point of view Spinoza would have nothing to do. Contact with people who wrote this sort of thing was impossible to him. How different and how much nobler was the spirit of the "Staatsgezinden," Jan de Witt's party, was shown by the work of Pieter de la Court: "Interest van Holland." The best among Spinoza's opponents were of the same opinion. They felt the high ethical spirit of the Treatise, but they also felt its audacity, for which they themselves lacked the courage. Among them were serious men of eminent intellect, such as the surgeon, Jacob Ostens, and the physician, Lambertus van Velthuysen.

Jacob Ostens had confronted Spinoza in person with the great unrest into which the Treatise had plunged him. He called on the philosopher in February of the year 1671. But he also wished to consult other interpretations, which would dispel his uncertainties and make it possible for him to reject the new thought. After all, these were the decisive questions of the times, questions about God and the Bible, about Church and State, about faith and free thought. Ostens was no longer young enough to change his mind, but he was too serious and too honest a man simply to pass these matters by. He felt that his friend and colleague, Velthuysen, would ease his mind and refute Spinoza. That would be the simplest solution.

And so, that same month, Velthuysen wrote an odious and narrow-minded letter which fell into Spinoza's hands.

Spinoza realized how mistaken he had been in Velthuysen, who belonged side by side with Albert Burgh and Willem van Blynbergh. In any case, the Utrecht physician was a sincere person and of an honest character. Spinoza did not want to break with him, although he saw that an understanding with this man concerning his philosophy was now out of the question. The man was too deeply bound to tradition and to theological prejudice, so that Spinoza's ideas seemed to him a destruction of faith and of all ethics, an interpretation which later found expression in Velthuysen's essay: "On Natural Religion and the Origin of Morality." In his letter, which was really an exhaustive criticism of the "Theological-Political Treatise," he raised arguments against this work which were petty, narrow and foolish. He levied all conceivable charges against Spinoza: that he had fallen into extremes in order to free himself from superstition, and had rejected all religion; that he had secretly introduced atheism and had pulled up, root and branch, all worship of God; that he had compared the Koran to Holy Writ, and had spoken of the Turks in the same way as of all other peoples. In this letter Velthuysen also said that he knew nothing of the personality of the writer nor could he say to what people he belonged, or what position in life he held. As Spinoza read these words, the experiences of his Jewish origin again broke through the walls of the past. The fact that he belonged to the Jewish people should be the best refutation of the suspicion that he wanted to destroy religion. Velthuysen had to know this. "If he had known it, then surely, he would not so easily have come to the conclusion

that I taught atheism." What did this man, what did any of them know about religion? They were so far from being free, that they were only miserable slaves even toward God, and, like slaves, they asked rewards for their services, which was pleasanter to them than the actual love of God. "Thus you see, my friend, that this man has strayed far from the truth. Nevertheless, I admit that he does no harm to me but very much to himself when he is not ashamed to say that I teach atheism by hidden and disguised arguments." And what terrible presumption this Christian Dutchman had toward other religions and peoples! The fact that somebody had read the Koran and also looked upon its teachings as a religion, was already a blasphemy to this narrow-minded man. "If they worship God by the exercise of justice and charity toward their neighbor, I believe that they have the Spirit of Christ and are saved, whatever convictions they may in their ignorance hold about Mohammed and the oracles." Spinoza knew that Turks and pagans could also possess the spirit of Christ.

When Spinoza heard such opinions and beheld the deluge of abuse, slander and misunderstanding which now overtook him, he had to admit all his efforts had been useless. Even those in whose faithfulness and understanding he had firmly believed were unreliable. They spoke entirely differently about his ideas to the people outside than they did to him in his poor room, where they were forced to look him in the eyes. In his eyes there was so much truth and desire for truth, that they could not contradict him. But outside, on the streets and in the govern-

ment chambers, they spoke of the Treatise exactly as the others, and repeated the cheap catch-words, such as atheist, destroyer of religion and enemy of all churches. When Spinoza heard of such talk, he answered quietly: "This is not the first day that the truth has had to pay dearly to be able to assert itself; slander will not be successful in making me disloyal to the truth." Other friends also came who were sincere and who considered the Treatise as a great spiritual work and a deed of liberation. But their thanks and their good wishes could not compensate for the disappointment and ignominy that assailed Spinoza from all sides. Under such circumstances it were better to shut himself entirely within the confines of his own life and thoughts.

There was no use being a world reformer and hurling oneself into the turmoil of everyday life. Nature and State are opposites. People belong to both and owe moral obligation to both, but the actual problems of life for each person can only be on the side of either the one or the other. "In the natural state each one cares for his own personal advantage, and lives according to his own notions. Whatever serves his personal welfare is good, and no law forces him to obey. He is only subject to himself." Out of these conditions also originate the creations of the spirit. But these spiritual creations, in turn, interpenetrate the condition of the State and of human society. Both spirit and society confront each other like question and answer, like problem and solution. In the natural state there are no sins and no crimes. In society, however, there are conventions to determine what is good and what is

evil; and besides, there is the duty of obedience to the State. Nothing was further from Spinoza's intention than to nullify these conventions or to refuse obedience to the State. But his enemies were shameless enough to misuse these venerable truisms of human society and to distort their meaning. These were the expedients by which the church leaders and the incited people attacked Spinoza. His efforts had all been in vain, at least for the moment.

So he turned back into himself and to his work. His dearest moments were spent with his instruments, the turntable and the lenses he was fashioning, in which the sun's rays were brightly refracted into many colors. His best friends were his books and his lofty ideas, which were now more than ever soaring upward into the pinnacle of his philosophy. Those who saw him on occasion were frightened at his appearance. His face had become increasingly paler, more transparent and shrunken. Spinoza did not like to talk about his illness. It would only have been a waste of time, and besides, his suffering and his dying were something which were of interest only to himself; they were his own destiny entirely. He felt the pall of death descending over his shoulders like a broad, dark mantle. He was not afraid of the end. He was only afraid that he might die before he had attained the final goal of his search for truth. His friends urged him to devote himself to his recovery, and to obey his doctor's orders. He could only smile at their well meant advice. He had no time for it. He was impelled to work with all the regained strength that now dominated him.

Thus there began a ghostly race between working and

dying, between creation and death. Spinoza wished to be the victor. He was determined to subordinate his entire life to his goal. For months, he did not leave the house. His meals were brought to his room so that he wouldn't waste a minute on such a minor matter as food. His main work was accomplished at night, until about three o'clock in the morning. Only then would he allow his tired, emaciated and feverish body a few hours of rest. He wanted to bury himself in work, just as his body would soon be buried in death. The only pauses he permitted himself were the few minutes he devoted to his congenial hosts. With his pipe in his mouth, he would speak to them about little everyday matters. But were these really little matters? Did not the perspective of every hour, every action and every person reach into God's universe? Are not the smallest act and the most modest human performance also part of the love of God?

Spinoza by no means felt that the poverty of his existence was an injustice. On the contrary, he felt that it was the only natural existence. "Nature is satisfied with very little, and if nature is satisfied, then so am I." Especially in those days, when he was quite sure of the truth of his ideas and the achievement of his great work, he knew how inadequate, petty and illusory external possessions are. The greatest lie, however, is fame, which is always associated with misunderstanding or even calumny. Whomever the masses acknowledge, honor or hate is lost. He is cheated out of his own achievements, which only the few can understand. The more a work is discussed, the more it will be misunderstood. Perhaps hate is better for a

philosopher than love, for love propagates ideas which please the masses, but which had never been thought of by the philosopher. Hate ferrets out new, uncomfortable, dangerous ideas and attacks them.

Thus, Spinoza learned to love his solitude. He lived in his poverty, his illness and his work. He defied all temptations by which he could be led into a different world. These were the only conditions possible for him; there could be no others. His person belonged entirely to the space in which he lived, his bright, shabby room. There he stood, in the daytime at his turntable, at night bent over his books and manuscripts. In spite of his Dutch costume, he had an air of the south. No difference could be greater than that between the fair-skinned Dutch faces to be seen on the streets of the city, and his dark hair, eyes and skin. The beauty of his face, whose boyish expression his disease had preserved, made a strong, never-to-be-forgotten impression on all his visitors. If we look at the portraits handed down to us, we see the life story of a countenance in which strength and destiny had been engraved with strokes that revealed Spinoza's meditative and open character.

His earlier portraits show the face of a young man, aristocratic and melancholy, reserved and alert at the same time. All the animation of his face seems to flow upwards into the eyes, the forehead and even higher. His gaze is dreamy and thoughtful, directed into space. The well formed forehead is clear and pure. It hardly seems related to the lower part of the face, from which the small, straight nose extends. The small mouth is tight shut, as

are seen in all these pictures, but not a trace of commonness and not a sign of peaceful, carefree happiness. Never was this face lit from without by the warmth of the sun's rays or by a life of ease. It was always illumined by a light from within, issuing from his eyes and piercing into space. His eyes were large and bright, searching and gentle. They penetrated through his own existence and all his thoughts, from the observation of daily life to the knowledge of God. Those dark eyes, so full of melancholy, were raised to God, not in prayer but in a flow of eager questions, an eternal search and unrest that arose out of a believing heart. With eyes like those, he saw further than anyone else. But he also suffered more and remained more alone.

Men with such faces have been considered in all times and by all peoples as saints. But their words, their faith and their piety has never found recognition during their lifetime. Always they were slandered, scorned and crucified. Had Spinoza lived in an earlier century, he would have had to undergo all the tortures of a martyr's life. Upon beholding his face, his enemies caught their breath and remained silent. But when they turned away, the power of those bright, knowing eyes seemed to pass and they found the courage to vent their abuse. A Frenchman, Gilles Menage, who was a teacher at the University of Paris and who invented and recounted many anecdotes, declared that, from the statement of people who had seen him, Spinoza's face showed a "trace of depravity," and had a somber expression. No doubt this information had been reported to the Frenchman. But, in giving credence

to this report, he overlooked the fact that the observer's expression is also mirrored in the face of the person being observed.

In his attic chamber Spinoza wore a shabby cotton coat. If he ever went out—a rare occurrence which created a sensation with his hosts—he dressed like a well-to-do Dutchman. He did not wish to appear unusual, and poverty in this prosperous city would have been unusual. No one ever heard a discourteous word from him, not even when he was speaking of his enemies, who liked so much to use the crudest and lowest expressions when talking of him. He preferred to leave a room rather than utter anything in excitement that he might afterwards regret. When his landlady became ill, he would try to console her and encourage her with hope of a speedy recovery. He was extremely fond of children, whom he always exhorted to obedience and to the reverence of God. He was never heard to say a word against the Church or against priests. His hosts were good Protestants. They knew the gossip about their roomer's atheism, but they knew that it could not be true. He had a different kind of piety from their own, a different faith for which there was no name, but which was certainly good and noble. Once his landlady asked him if he thought that, with her faith, she could be saved. Spinoza answered, "Your faith is good. You do not need to seek for any other one in order to be saved, if only you lead a quiet and god-fearing life." The woman had not expected any answer different from this, but she knew now that not only she but he, too, was a pious being, in spite of the vicious slander.

In the quiet moments of rest from his work he liked to observe the life of animals. How much they resembled men! How much they were governed by the passion for destruction! But in men one despised what one admired in animals. Pigeons were jealous, and bees made war; and precisely for these reasons they were considered perfect.

There were also men in the ecclesiastical camp—very few, to be sure—who did not believe the hate-filled rumors, and who honored Spinoza and liked to converse with him. There was the preacher, Doctor Cordes, the predecessor in office of Colerus, for whom Spinoza had great esteem, so that, from time to time, he even went to his church to hear his sermon. He was an anomaly in the church encampment, and precisely for that reason the two men felt close to each other. Everyone admired Spinoza's conversation for the clarity, simplicity and lucidity of his expression. His words were fraught with great modesty and with the desire to help his visitor gain knowledge and wisdom. From his portraits, one can guess at the tone of his voice: it must have been dark, low, and gentle, the voice of a cello playing a soft andante.

Into this simple, quiet existence the catastrophic year of 1672 exploded like a bombshell.

II

By the death of Jan de Witt, Spinoza's philosophy was deprived of the protection of the State. Sympathy for the spirit of the liberal Regents and of the Republic soon disappeared. For this murder, prepared by the agitation of

underground instigators, by the intemperate attacks of the Church and the tenacious struggles of the Orange Party, also meant the end of the freedom that the Grand Pensionary had represented. Soon the enemies crept out of their dark corners, out of their fetid world of secrecy and conspiracy, so that, as conquerors and masters of the land, they might uproot the spirit of freedom. Under the government of Jan de Witt, the State would never have proscribed the writings of serious men on account of their liberal views, merely because the Church demanded it. Now the entire situation had become quite different. The State was ruled by a spirit which was just as far removed from Jan de Witt's ideals as from the new philosophy of natural rights.

The Synods demanded the proscription of a great number of books. But for no book was this demand so stormy and so malevolent as was the case with the "Theological-Political Treatise"; because this work was the representative document of the hated regime soon to be overthrown by violence. How could a conviction be destroyed if it continued to spread its poisoned breath over the land out of a book? The book had to be destroyed in order to destroy Spinoza, who was a friend and admirer of the Grand Pensionary, and in order to destroy the Freedom Party. What had been only yesterday an idle, almost ridiculous squabble among the theologians, had today become a political affair; for a political reaction is always reflected in the spiritual life.

The events showed in which camp the multitude had taken its stand. It is true that the Sectarians had been

successful in their long war with the preachers, with the result that a somewhat freer spirit had been allowed to enter into the churches. But the dogmatic edifice of the Calvinist faith had remained undisturbed, and the power of orthodoxy had not been broken. The authority of the preachers was so great that the multitude gladly shared with them their rage against the poor Jewish lens grinder. The content of Spinoza's doctrines was quite indifferent to them. But the fact that a man who held no official academic position, who was not even a Christian, should attack their holy, religious doctrines, was monstrous and demanded intervention by the State. In the circles of the learned the agitation was kept alive by the countless pamphlets against the Treatise, by the learned controversies that raged not only in Holland but above all in Germany. This agitation only served to increase the circulation of the book, which in a few years went through several editions. In order to avoid confiscation, these books were masked under the most diverse titles and names of authors. In the councils of the preachers the demand for suppression became more and more urgent and violent. To be sure, they did not, as the Pope did, demand the banning of all criticism of religious doctrine and dogma; but this book, in their opinion, went far beyond mere criticism and actually demolished the foundations of Christian faith.

The preachers became more and more zealous. The complaints and resolutions of the church councils and the synods became so numerous that they could scarcely be counted. On the 30th of June, 1670, the Church Council of Amsterdam brought forward this grievance: "Our

Church only desires that among the old complaints special care should be taken with regard to the boldness of the Papacy and of the Socinians, and the unrestricted printing of books, especially the dangerous book entitled 'Theological-Political Treatise.'" A few days later the District Synod of the Hague expressed the same demand; and the Synod of South Holland gave this opinion on the Treatise: "as wicked and blasphemous as, to our knowledge, the world has ever seen, and about which the Synod must be grieved in the extreme." And with expressions such as wicked, blasphemous, pernicious and soul-destroying they raged on: the District Synod of Amsterdam, the Synod of North Holland, all the ecclesiastical power of the land. But Jan de Witt was still living then. He paid very little attention to the indignation of the churchmen, and had no intention of obeying it. Hence, Spinoza's enemies had to find another way than that of resolutions and complaints. They employed juridical means and had the Court of Holland, the highest tribunal of the land, issue an opinion on the "Theological-Political Treatise" and other heretical writings. Now they could approach the Grand Pensionary. "With the deepest respect we urgently petition Your Excellency not only to find prompt and effective means, according to Your high wisdom, for the confiscation of the above separately listed blasphemous books, and especially that vicious book entitled, 'Theological-Political Treatise,' but also to issue an effective decree to close the door, once and for all, against the invasion of such soul-destroying books."

Spinoza knew that this war was being waged not only

against his writings, but also against the whole spirit of freedom exemplified by the best leaders of the people. The people, however, had been spurred on, and were a prey to all the emotions which the terrible war had stirred up. In the Treatise he had himself expressed this: "Not only reason but experience teaches us every day that the strangling of intellectual freedom is only a product of weakness and fanaticism. For if one is clothed in the garb of a dark authority, then one can easily change the real religion of the mob, which is ever inclined to revolt, into open frenzy against anyone whose free thinking threatens to become uncomfortable." But it is always better to take measures against the provoked rage of the people than to suppress the freedom of intellectual life. Otherwise the noblest beings are deprived of the necessary air for breathing, and hands are wrongfully laid upon the dignity of free minds.

Jan de Witt was of a similar opinion. No matter how often they attempted to force him to suppress the Treatise, he would not accede to their demand. For in the end, he would have had to deny himself if he were to prohibit a work which was so close to his own way of thinking.

But he was a politician and well versed in diplomatic methods. It would have been unwise to reject the written petitions bluntly. It was better tactics to procrastinate and allow the matter to be forgotten. The synods had no other alternative but to continue to exhort and to remind him: "The deputies have heard indirectly that Your Excellency has read the legal opinion and has resolved to examine this matter more closely." Increasing pressure

was brought to bear, and the question was asked: "Would it not be a good thing in these confused times, in order to ward off the judgment of the Lord and to obtain His divine blessing, to petition Your Excellency in all earnestness and zeal to cause the removal of the indicated ground of complaint." But even the new Grand Pensionary, Gaspar Fagel, only answered that the Treatise and other such writings had already been the subject of lengthy reports, that much had already been done, but that, for the rest, his time was at the moment entirely taken up with other affairs.

Not only Jan de Witt but his successor also, in spite of all the stubborn efforts of the church councils, could not be persuaded to suppress the Treatise. Even after 1672, the free spirit and the republican party lived on for a while. Only in the year 1674 did the power of the Governor and the House of Orange become so great that all wishes of the reactionary regime could be realized. There was no clearer sign of the fall of the Republic and the muzzling of every independent, critical opinion than the poster which proclaimed the suppression of the "Theological-Political Treatise" and other writings by the Court of Holland. It had the following wording: "William Henry, by the Grace of God, Prince of Orange and Nassau, Count of Katzenellenbogen . . . in agreement with the President and the Councillors of Holland and West Friesland, herewith proclaims: whereas it has been brought to our notice that, for some time, divers Socinian and other pernicious books have been printed and published here, and are still distributed and sold daily: to

wit, the books entitled *Leviathan, Library of the Polish Brothers,* who are called Unitarians, *Philosophy as Interpretation of Holy Writ,* as well as the *Theological-Political Treatise;* and whereas, after examination of their contents, we have found not only that they subvert the teachings of the true, Reformed Christian Church, but are also overflowing with every blasphemy against God, His attributes and His sacred Trinity, against the divinity of Jesus Christ and His true miracles; that they, furthermore, seek to cast contempt upon the fundamental tenets of the above-mentioned true Christian religion and the authority of Holy Writ, and to plunge into doubt those whose spirits are weak and faltering; and whereas they persist directly contrary to the repeated edicts and publicly posted proclamations of the land; we therefore consider it our duty, in order to prevent, as much as possible, this dangerous poison from infecting anyone, to condemn said books and to declare them blasphemous and soul-destroying, and full of groundless and dangerous views and atrocities derogatory to true religion and the service of the Church. Accordingly, we hereby forbid all and everyone the printing of these or similar writings, their distribution by auction, sale or other means, under pain of punishment, as set forth in the proclamation of the land, particularly in accordance with the edict issued on the 9th of September, 1653. At the same time, we command that each one to whom this decree applies should govern himself accordingly thereunder; and that this edict shall be proclaimed and posted wherever proper, and in accordance with customs followed in all similar cases. Issued

under the seal affixed below, on the 19th day of July, 1674."

And so the obscurantists had attained the goal for which they had fought for four years. The good fortune of which Spinoza had been so conscious: to have been permitted to live in a land where unlimited freedom of thought had prevailed and where everyone had been given the right to worship God according to his own convictions, was now shattered. On all government buildings one could read the edict in which the deepest and most heartfelt conviction had been stamped as pernicious and blasphemous. Until now, the name of Spinoza had not been mentioned, but as his authorship was known everywhere, and as he might write even more dangerous books, it was considered advisable to reveal his name. On the 21st of June, 1675, the Consistory of the Hague proclaimed: "As the Consistory has heard that the most godless ideas of Spinoza are beginning to spread more and more, here as well as elsewhere, everyone is most earnestly requested to ascertain how much truth there is in this, and to find out whether any new work of his has gone to the press, and what danger it may threaten; and then to give more detailed information to this assembly and to act in accordance with the findings."

This meant that the Consistory of the city in which Spinoza was now living openly challenged the people to spy on him and his work, to observe his life and to eavesdrop on his conversation as though he were a traitor to his country. Other synods followed. They wished to find a common means against the spreading of Spinoza's ideas.

What was Spinoza to do? A struggle would be hopeless and would only bring humiliation upon himself. The struggle could only be waged when his person would no longer play a part in it, and his ideas themselves, by their own strength, would vindicate their existence. This was the time when Spinoza was preparing the publication of his "Ethics." His decision was made: the book was to be published only after his death, and then without mention of his name. Did this mean a victory for the Synod and the boundless persecution he had had to suffer? For Spinoza, it meant his own victory: only thus would his work be raised above all the accidents of chance, and be enabled to go its spiritual way, as he himself followed his earthly way, in solitude, with only God's truth as a companion.

At the same time as this war of the churches, the attacks of the scholars took place. For them it was a different question from that of Church and State; in the Treatise ideas were conceived and developed which were in sharpest contrast to their own teachings. They perceived the new, daring and radical change of spirit which, although already initiated by others, had never before been carried to such an extreme as in Spinoza's work. The struggle of the scholars was, therefore, also a war of age against youth; and as this struggle took place at a time when all foundations were shaking and tottering, it was more full of emotion, hate and cruelty than ordinary conflict among scholars. And the fact that this Spinoza was a philosopher without an academic post, actually nothing more than a Jewish workman, seasoned the polemics with a good dose of contempt.

Like infuriated hyenas they fell upon the Treatise and tried to tear it to pieces with their fangs, from which there usually dripped the old, honeyed, scholastic doctrines. Jacob Thomasius called him a writer shunning the light, a slanderous ex-Jew, a complete atheist. A theologian from Utrecht, Frans Burman Senior, asked Jacobus Alting, a Hebraist at the University of Groningen, to destroy this unholy book: "I know of no one who could annihilate it except you, your fame as a scholar of divinity being so great." In the opinion of a German preacher, Johann Melchior, Spinoza's ideas were "tricks of an extraordinarily presumptuous person, a bundle of tricks which he has woven together to discredit the truth of our religion." Melchior was also the first one to write a detailed refutation of the Treatise. Spinoza's enemies attempted to marshal the most powerful and best known intellects of the times against him. They came to Leibnitz with the complaint that the writer of this treatise, whom the Synagogue had already expelled, had opened wide "the window to atheism."

They fell upon him with every kind of weapon, pitting against him the authorities of the Church, the tribunals, the State, the trenchant barbs of learned polemics and, above all, the envenomed passions of the mob. Spinoza himself received this outburst of hatred quietly. He was sure of the truth of his ideas, and he knew that the time would come when they would victoriously reach out to all men. He had been born too soon and had spoken too early, exactly as Jan de Witt had lived and acted too far in advance of his time. They had murdered him; perhaps

they would also kill Spinoza if he continued to speak out what he had thought and discovered in the depths of his sincerity and his great obligation to God. But he was determined to keep silent for the rest of his life. The resurrection of which the churches spoke would be for him the resurrection of his ideas in a newer and freer world.

That was what Baruch Spinoza dreamed as he lay on the narrow bed which he had inherited from his father, and which he had preserved since his days in Amsterdam. He dreamed of the painful past and of the stormy present. He foresaw the future, when through his philosophy he would become what his name signified: Baruch, the blessed one.

III

When the first horror aroused by the murder of Jan de Witt had quieted down, and the tumult in his heart had been stilled, Spinoza allowed his intellect to emerge again. His deepest emotions had torn through the walls of reason, a liberation which the intellect is never able to accomplish. After this emotional outburst, relief had come, and the logical powers of reason again took possession of his existence. His friends were astonished at his quickly regained composure, but Spinoza gave them a philosophical answer: "What would be the good of wisdom if, having fallen into the violent emotions of the mob, we did not have the strength to raise ourselves up again through our own power?"

And so he raised himself above the cries of rage and

the dangers which the Treatise had called forth. It was already a long time since he had completed this book, which had been intended as an incidental work only. Even further back in his consciousness lay the demonstrations of stupidity and superstitious fear which had been turned against him. When Jan de Witt had stepped out of the prison in which his brother had been held, right into the very midst of his murderers, firearms had been pointed at him from all sides. But the Grand Pensionary had needed only to look into the faces of the infuriated burghers and he had been able to ward off every single weapon with a wave of his hand. Thus he had freed the way for himself and for his brother. The shot which had felled him had come from ambush. In the same way Spinoza wished to disarm his opponents by the greatness of his thoughts, by the sincerity of his reasoning and by the purity of his intentions. The Treatise, which had come out of a heart rooted in reason, had been like a violent hemorrhage, dangerous for the moment, but then a relief and a deliverance, ending with a quiet pulse and new vital energy.

In the same way Spinoza mastered his disappointment at the faithlessness of those whom he had thought closely attached to him. How hard it was to distinguish truth from falsehood in their words; how difficult to keep from doing them an injustice! He was obliged to trust them all, for he could not breathe in the rarefied atmosphere of suspicion. And thus he found himself repeatedly disillusioned by many of his friends, so that he might preserve the priceless blessing of his belief in the few. From an entirely new world a man now came to him, flattering him and

soliciting his friendship; but then, like the others, he attacked Spinoza with vile words, and falsified the substance of his ideas. His name was Jean Baptiste Stouppe.

Stouppe was an adventurer both in actual life and in the realm of ideas. He was a Swiss who had studied theology. In England he had become a preacher and had been employed by Cromwell in political missions; and in the France of Louis XIV he had been a soldier and officer. The war between France and the Netherlands had brought him to Utrecht, which was held by the French. Here he led an animated existence, studying people and also the new spirit of the land, which stood in such glaring contrast to the world of classicism which held sway at the court of the *"roi soleil."* Of all the Netherlands' thinkers and writers, Spinoza interested him the most. He made haste to procure his writings. He wanted to become acquainted with this northern philosophy that was reputed to be heretical. He wanted to know this Jewish lens grinder personally. After all, Stouppe was a Protestant and his theological views were in direct contrast to those of Catholicism as practiced in Paris and Versailles. During his sojourn in Utrecht at a time of war, this Colonel of Swiss origin became especially conscious of this contrast.

On the 2nd of May, 1673, Stouppe received a letter from a preacher in Berne, reproving him in the crudest terms for being in the service of a Catholic king and fighting against the free Protestant spirit of the Netherlands Republic. Every genuine Protestant was duty-bound in this war between the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation to take his place in the camp of the Nether-

lands. Service under a Catholic flag was a betrayal of the idea of Protestantism.

The reproach was severe and the letter itself a document which brought into clear relief the European situation of those years, when religious wars, the ambition of rulers, movements for freedom and for political reaction had been tangled into a knot almost impossible to unravel. Desultorily, adventitiously and inorganically world history was evolving. Revolution and counter-revolution, religious wars and wars of conquest alternated so quickly that not only the events but also the ideas for which the nations were fighting were jumbled into each other. Young Jean Baptiste Stouppe had no higher ideal than the faith of the Reformed Church. For its sake he had become a preacher and had gone to Oliver Cromwell's England. Now he was a soldier in the predatory wars of the most powerful Catholic ruler, the most reckless and dangerous prince of that time. He was fully aware of his ambiguous position and wished to employ the quiet hours of his life in an occupied country to justify himself with regard to the charges made by his countryman and former colleague. He intended to show how this Protestant State, this "Holy Republic," really looked, and to reveal the truth about a land which seemed to his Protestant co-religionists to be a martyr for their religion.

It was still in the month of May when Stouppe wrote his little book entitled "The Dutch Religion, as Represented by Several Letters Written by an Officer of the King's Army to a Minister and Professor of Theology at Berne." In six letters he tried to arouse distrust in the

true Protestant faith of this country. It was really inhabited by Sectarians, and was filled with religious uncertainty. It was by no means a strong and deep religious community, as was thought at home. The people of the Netherlands were not at all "of the religion"; on the contrary, they were unreliable in all religious and spiritual matters. For instance, there was a man who stood beyond all religions. He had been born a Jew, and had left the religion of his ancestors without becoming a Christian. He was a bad Jew and a worse Christian. "A few years before, he had written a book in Latin, entitled the "Tractatus Theologico-Politicus," the main purpose of which seems to have been to destroy all religions, especially the Jewish and the Christian, and to establish atheism, immorality and irreligiousness." It is true that the Protestant theologians of this country were enraged against these heretical views. They had called for the suppression of this book and for intervention by the State, but they hadn't dared write against the views of this Treatise. "If they continue any longer in their silence, the people would have the right to declare that they have no religion, because they allow so shameful a book to exist without refutation; or perhaps because they approve the opinions of the author, or else are lacking in courage and strength to oppose him."

In this way Colonel Stouppe used Spinoza to prove that the Netherlands were by no means a safe haven for the Protestant religion, and that consequently he was perfectly right in fighting with a Catholic army against the Republic. The blasphemy in this argument was monstrous,

and the artificial, dishonest argumentation which this soldier employed to excuse himself for his faithlessness was depressing. Why didn't he tell the truth? Why not admit that in those adventurous and disjointed times not even religion offered a stable refuge? Stouppe was an adventurer like countless others in that era. He took no thought of the morrow; but that in itself did not make him a traitor to Protestantism. He was in the service of the French King simply as a result of circumstances. He had to live and he had to go through adventures. He had to use the experiences and opportunities of that fantastic century to his own advantage. Stouppe was no doubt aware of all this, only he didn't have the courage to admit it. His theological past was still too strong in him. Hence, he tried to justify himself as a theologian and sacrificed this irrelevant fellow named Spinoza to the untruthfulness of his views simply because the name of Spinoza happened to occur to him at that particular moment.

But the worst betrayal he committed was the betrayal of himself. For to no other man in the Netherlands had he accorded so much honor and interest as to Spinoza. A certain Lambert van Velthuysen, who lived in Utrecht, was also one of the "inquiring" intellectuals whom Stouppe mentioned in his booklet. He was the one who had directed the Colonel to Spinoza, inducing him to study his works and arousing his curiosity. All Stouppe's efforts were then directed toward making the personal acquaintance of the Dutch philosopher. This man was certainly the most interesting mind in the land, the greatest of his century. Stouppe thought that since the war had brought him to

the Netherlands, it was now absolutely necessary for him to meet this man. But in spite of this curiosity and the strong impression which the scope of Spinoza's ideas left upon him, he humiliated the philosopher by mendacious subterfuge and hateful calumny, hoping in this way to refute the attack made on him by his one-time colleague.

But Stouppe's pamphlet had an entirely different effect from the one he had expected. A controversial treatise was published, whose author was a preacher, Jean Brun in Nijmegen. It bore the title, "The Real Religion of the Dutch." This controversy between the two theologians was extraordinary, carried on as it was in the midst of a war which little concerned the subject of their dispute. The treatise in question dealt with the religion of a country against which one of the disputants had to fight as a soldier, and in which the other fulfilled the duty of a preacher. Brun also spoke of Spinoza, but only to contradict Stouppe's dishonest contention. "Whether he is a Jew or not does not either confirm or deny the religion of the Dutch. Yet, I believe that Stouppe is mistaken if he believes that Spinoza had in no way foresworn the Jewish religion, for he not only had renounced all its precepts but did not in any way submit to its customs or rituals." But Spinoza should be allowed to decide for himself whether he was a Jew or not. To Jean Brun it seemed doubtful that Spinoza was really the author of this anonymous Treatise, which, after all, had been published in Hamburg and not in these provinces; moreover, the government had immediately intervened and the book had been suppressed. What was the purpose, therefore, of this meddling by the

enemy officer? Here, the truth-loving preacher of Nijmegen divulged a secret which put the dishonesty of Stouppe in its proper light as nothing else could have done. "It surprises me very much that Stouppe takes the field against this Spinoza so violently, and declares that many of the philosopher's countrymen visit him. While Spinoza was staying in Utrecht, Stouppe himself had formed a very close friendship with him. For I was assured that the Prince of Condé, at the instigation of Stouppe, had had Spinoza summoned from the Hague to Utrecht so that the Colonel could confer with him, and that Stouppe had praised him highly and had been associated with him on very intimate terms."

No disclosure could have been more painful to the Colonel than this, for it corresponded absolutely to the truth. Indeed, Stouppe's desire to meet the philosopher he admired had been so great that he had used all his power and influence to induce him to come to Utrecht through the front lines of both armies. And this attempt was successful, for in May of 1673, Spinoza left the Hague and travelled through the Dutch and French positions to Utrecht.

Today, the motives which induced Spinoza to undertake this dangerous trip are inscrutable. It was a journey which was exposed to all kinds of misinterpretations. This man, whom every new face frightened, drove alone through the hazardous world of war and soldiers into the enemy army's headquarters. It was supposed to have been a trip for diplomatic reasons. Spinoza, it was said, had come as a negotiator for peace. But the exact truth

was not known. It would seem most unlikely that Spinoza had wished to ask the French king for an annuity. The commanding officer of the occupation army was Louis of Bourbon, Prince of Condé, a man of letters, whose greatest ambition had been to gather around himself the most important scholars of his time. He desired other laurels than those of the soldier, and was happy when, after the war was ended, he could gather around himself again at his castle in Champigny such personalities as Racine, Corneille, Molière, Boileau and La Bruyère. In Utrecht, too, this humanist prince and general had inquired about the great minds of the land. Colonel Stouppe had been enthusiastic only about Spinoza, with the result that the Prince's invitation soon went forth to the Hague. That Spinoza should have accepted this invitation may probably be explained as follows.

The attacks which had resulted from the Treatise, the deluge of abuse which had been poured out against his views and his life, had left Spinoza in doubt whether this country was still a place for a free spirit. From one of the foreign countries which were preparing to take away the national independence of the Republic now came this call, to which Spinoza listened attentively. Certainly, he could not have thought of going to Paris in the event that Condé were to offer him an invitation from Louis XIV. Yet, perhaps some opportunity might present itself to him to enter a different life, one of contemplation and of peace, a life without abuse and vilification, far from the insensate ravings of the hapless mob. And then, too, Spinoza might perhaps have been attracted by the idea of spending some

time with people of another nation without leaving his own country. True, it was a nation whose politics he opposed and whose absolutist regime he abhorred, but nevertheless it was one of the greatest and noblest nations of Europe, and above all, the nation of René Descartes.

The leaders of both enemy armies had provided Spinoza with credentials, so that he could pass unhindered through their billets, encampments, and positions up to the French headquarters at Utrecht. When he arrived, the Prince was not there. He spoke to the Duke of Luxembourg, to Colonel Stouppe, to the intellectual Dutchmen of the city and to innumerable well educated French officers, who interviewed him concerning his own philosophy and the most recent questions of theology and natural science. For several weeks Spinoza waited in vain for the Prince's return. However, military exigencies had obliged the latter to remain away from Utrecht.

Finally Spinoza returned by the same martial route he had come. What he took with him was the memory of several brilliant conversations, of an atmosphere of war, of the character of a nation whose mind and language were entirely different from his own, but whose gay charm and lucid thought were congenial even to people who approached it from the earnest and conflict-ridden world of the North. He took with him a description of the death of Descartes, which he preserved as a relic.

On his way back he discovered that this adventurous visit had also been used against him by his enemies. People were enraged and adopted a menacing attitude toward him. This blasphemer of God and calumniator of

religion, this miserable atheist and poisoner of the souls of the people, this expelled Jew was also a traitor to Holland! He was a spy of Louis XIV, who had commanded him to come to his camp so that he could deliver the unhappy Netherlands entirely into the hands of the enemy! This idea had become fixed in the minds of the people, and it was not easy to refute it. Even the circle of Spinoza's friends was at a loss to account for any definite motives which might make this unusual voyage seem understandable. Indeed, Spinoza himself sometimes wondered why he had accepted the invitation and had given way to his own vague longing. When he returned to the Paviljoensgracht, he found it besieged by an excited, indignant crowd. He had difficulty in entering his home. Van der Spyk feared that the mob would storm the house in order to seize Spinoza.

Spinoza had never dreamed that his inopportune trip would have such results. A poet named Frans Joachim Oudaen ridiculed the virtuous philosopher:

Spinoza cozened us with virtuous guise,
Confused our faith with "Ethics" and with lies.
In vain this pretty cloak of simulation!
For those who find in him their inspiration
Will ne'er erase the stigma that he boasts
Of finding favor with his foreign hosts
In Utrecht. . . .

Spinoza was disturbed at this new, vile suspicion which degraded him into a spy, but he was not afraid. "Do not be troubled," he said his landlord, "I am innocent, and there are many among those in high places

who well know why I went to Utrecht. As soon as you hear any disturbance at your door, I will go out to the people even if they should treat me as they treated the good Mr. de Witt. I am an honest Republican, and the welfare of the Republic is my aim."

The trip to Utrecht had shown Spinoza that his fame, which he had never sought and had always tried to avoid, had penetrated into the French camp. His fame, however, was even greater in Germany, the country in whose intellectual world the Treatise had created an even stronger reaction and had caused even greater excitement than in Holland. Germany was the home not only of the Reformation but also of many sectarian movements, and of a mysticism which anticipated the magical and mystical essence of Spinozistic rationalism. And Germany was also the home of the new Humanism which had also penetrated deep into Holland, and had first appeared to Spinoza as a child, in the person of his teacher, Manasseh ben Israel. Spinoza had German friends; often German scholars would come to see him, when travelling through the Hague. And above all he was closely attached to Henry Oldenburg, a German. But never had the thought occurred to him to travel to Germany and to study the land, the people and their ideas. Never had he felt more interest in that country than in his own, and never had the fantastic notion entered his mind that a sojourn in Germany was something to be desired.

But it was precisely from this country that Spinoza had received an invitation a few months before his trip to Utrecht. This invitation was the most revolutionary event

of his external existence. In it there had been the most important recognition that his work had hitherto been accorded, and at the same time, the prospect of a future that had nothing in common with his past, which had so entirely corresponded to his character. For the first time a high office had been offered to him which would have raised him high above the poor and miserable life of a simple artisan, and would have put him into the community of which he had dreamed as a boy: the community of seekers and intellectual leaders, the community of scholars.

Twenty years before, the Palatine Elector, Karl Ludwig, had created the University of Heidelberg. He was a modern, free-thinking prince who had been depressed by the experiences of the great religious war and who, after the peace, had lived only according to the ideals of an intellectual world. He hoped—and the same goal was pursued in Germany by no less a person than Leibnitz—to lead all Christian denominations back to unity. To this ideal he had dedicated the Temple of Concord in Mannheim. Very few princes in Germany were so devoted to the spirit of freedom and humanity as Karl Ludwig. He had also studied the new scientific teachings, which were, for the most part, branded as heretical by the general public. He studied Descartes, and at the end of his life became a Spinozist.

He had been instructed in Spinoza's ideas by a Frenchman, Urbain Chevreau, who lived for a time at his court. "While I was at the court of this Elector, I spoke very enthusiastically of Spinoza, although I knew this Protes-

tant Jew only through the first and second parts of his essay on Cartesian philosophy, which had been published in Amsterdam in 1663 by Jan Rieuwertz. The Elector possessed this book and, after he had read some chapters, he decided to invite Spinoza to his Academy at Heidelberg in order to teach philosophy there, under the condition that he should not be dogmatic."

The actual invitation came through the theologian, Johann Ludwig Fabritius, who offered a professorship at Heidelberg to Spinoza on the 16th of February, 1673. "You will not find elsewhere a prince more favorable to distinguished geniuses, among whom he reckons you. You will have the utmost freedom to teach your philosophy, although he believes you will not abuse it to disturb the officially established religion."

Spinoza was greatly agitated. He was unprepared for this invitation because he had never contemplated holding an official position or changing the course of his life. What a contrast the opportunity presented to his eyes: the hatred at home, the slander and persecution, and even threats to his life; and then this honor which had come from a foreign land, promising not only a secure and peaceful existence but also the greatest distinction and acknowledgment possible in the intellectual world. As Spinoza held this letter in his hand, reading and rereading it in order to persuade himself that the invitation was no trick or joke but was really true, it seemed to him that the world had suddenly changed its aspect for him. No greater change could have been imagined: evil had been changed into good, the ugly into the beautiful. The scorned here-

tic, the helpless puppet of the vituperative churchmen who had proscribed his books, the miserable, desperately sick lens grinder was to become a professor, the protégé of a powerful German prince. From the street came the echo of shouts for his destruction. But beyond the border honors were offered him, honors such as a non-professional enemy of official learning had never received.

We might suppose that this invitation should have made Spinoza immensely happy. But it only troubled him; for there was too much at stake. In his mind there was a higher aim than recognition, success and security. It was the deep, mystical harmony between his life and his work, between existence and wisdom. That he should leave his house and his country, that he should say farewell to his handicraft and to his poverty, that he should, perhaps, never again see the few people who loved him—all this would be an experience calculated to arouse such trepidation in him as would overshadow the happiness that the distinction might bring. He would have to enter a strange existence which was not his own, which would not be the result of his character or of his destiny. Although a republican, he would have to become part of a royal court and live in a foreign country whose language he did not understand. His fear was quite genuine. It was less the fear of the new than the fear of bidding farewell to the old. The fact that his old existence meant humbleness, poverty and, for all those who judged by externals, nothing but unhappiness, did not bother him.

In his quiet hermitage, Spinoza laid his existence upon a balance. On the one side lay fame, security, wealth,

splendor and power; and upon the other he laid with tender hands his old painful experiences, hate, scorn, slander and poverty, want and disease. His eyes followed the swaying of the balance. When it stopped moving, Spinoza realized that the weight which represented the glamor of happiness and cheerfulness was too light. Once again a moment had struck in his life when the great rationalist did not hearken to the voice of reason but only to the voice of feeling. It was a feeling of passionate assent to the gloomy past and a rejection of the alluring future. It was as though a monk who had spent his whole life in prayer in a monastic cell had suddenly been called out into the wide world. Humbly, the monk throws himself upon his knees and begs God to protect him from this temptation and to allow him to continue his old, holy life. "Lead me not into temptation," he cries out in despair, and bars the door of his cell so that the dangers of the world might not penetrate it.

Just as young Baruch had renounced his father's inheritance, which would have assured him a comfortable existence, so Spinoza now refused this advancement. He did not wish to offend the generous prince. The prince, however, had attached a condition to his invitation, which Spinoza could use as an excuse. Moreover, he intended to tell the simple truth. On the 30th of March, 1673, he answered Fabritius. "Since, however, it was never my intention to give public instruction, I cannot persuade myself to embrace this glorious opportunity, although I have long debated the matter with myself. For, first, I think that if I wish to find time for instructing youth, then

I must desist from developing my philosophy. And second, I think that I do not know within what limits the freedom of teaching philosophy ought to be confined in order to avoid the appearance of intentionally disturbing the officially established religion. For schisms arise not so much from a fervent love of religion as from men's various dispositions or from the love of contradiction, through which they are wont to distort and to condemn all ideas, even those that have been correctly stated. I have already experienced such matters while leading a private and solitary life. How much more, then, are they to be feared after I shall have risen to this degree of dignity. Thus you see, Most Honored Sir, that I am not holding back in the hope of some better opportunity, but from a love of peace, which I believe I can obtain to a certain extent merely by refraining from public lectures."

Spinoza read this letter over carefully several times before sending it off. Never before had a communication issued from this room which had so momentous an effect on his destiny. Perhaps Spinoza was also thinking that it would not be very long before a higher power would take away from him the necessity for any decision with regard to his earthly existence. His face looked happy and young. He glanced around his humble room. Then he lit the lamp and took down a book. The atmosphere about him was suffused with a fateful radiance of triumph and infinite serenity.

Nevertheless, to express my feelings frankly, I would say that Spinoza's arguments do not satisfy me either, although he explains himself most clearly.

—*LEIBNITZ*

CHAPTER NINE

Saint Baruch in His Cell

I

NEITHER IN Voorburg nor in Rhynsburg had Spinoza been successful in keeping away the visitors. Their number grew ever greater in the house on the Paviljoensgracht. Formerly Spinoza had been an object of controversy because of his ideas on theological and philosophical subjects, and only people engaged in these studies and wishing to converse with him on pertinent matters had come to see him. But since then the Treatise had been published. A furious and dangerous hatred had developed against him. The European scene had changed, and free-thinking had become as much a form of rebellion as a habit. Spinoza's character had been distorted into a caricature. At this time it became quite the fashion for certain people to come to see him and to speak with him. From Dutch cities and from foreign countries fashionable ladies and gentlemen came to gaze through their lorgnettes and monocles at this exotic animal, this infamous atheist, this Netherlands monster, this charlatan. They were amazed

and disappointed. This man was no fierce revolutionary tossing wild words around with sinister looks and clenched fists. He was only a simple artisan, a quiet, modest man, a meek sectarian living in a miserable hovel. Such was the disappointed judgment of these visitors.

Why didn't Spinoza show these fine ladies and gentlemen to the door? Why didn't he explain to them that he was not on exhibition for inquisitive eyes? Even now he hadn't abandoned his faith in men. He believed in their honesty until betrayal, faithlessness or ridicule taught him better. Every new name that was announced signified hope concerning some human being. Perhaps there might be someone who was wretched and burdened, and whom a word of his might help.

And then there were also a good many seekers and scholars who were despondent in those adverse times, free-thinking intellectuals who, like Spinoza, wished to be rid of theological trammels. There were many Dutchmen and many foreigners who wished to rekindle their knowledge at this new spiritual torch. Gladly he extended his hands towards them, and cleared the instruments and books from the chairs to make room for them. He looked into their alien faces, observing their strange manners. Were not many of them like the eastern brothers of his race, who had travelled far distances on weary feet to ask advice and help from the miraculous rabbi? Spinoza also represented the wise rabbi for many of them, the great expert on the Bible, the priest of an unknown God. Faced by the avalanche of questions which overwhelmed the more thoughtful minds of that confused era, they asked

him for truth and guidance. At first they addressed themselves to him by letter; then they came in person.

There were Germans, thirsting for knowledge, who wished to tear metaphysics down from its cloudy heights. There were Frenchmen of Latin composure and clarity, Cartesians who brusquely rejected the confusion of the present. There were sectarian Dutchmen with constantly new and, for the most part, erroneous interpretations of Holy Writ. And then there were the mathematicians and natural scientists, from every land, whose exact thinking and observations were a solace in view of the general emotional chaos. Some even unbared their private secrets and sorrows to Spinoza; in him they saw a physician who could cure souls. Still others came to the lens grinder to discuss questions on optical technique. They all came with hopes and expectations to him, to a man who had been damned and defamed, but whose greatest happiness nonetheless consisted in teaching and aiding.

From this anonymous crowd of visitors a few personalities stood out. Samuel Pufendorf, the great German jurist for whom the Palatine Elector Karl Ludwig had established a chair of natural law in Heidelberg, came to the Hague because Spinoza's ideas on public law interested him. However, he gave a very uncharitable account of his visit. "I have made the acquaintance of Spinoza, a superficial chap, *deorum hominumque irrisor,* who has bound together into one volume the New Testament and the Koran. I found nothing subtle about him, but he is worth while taking the trouble to destroy *funditus.*"

A certain Henault came from Paris, negligible as a

man of letters, a notorious *bon vivant,* who flaunted his atheistic views and, as Bayle's dictionary has it, promenaded his feelings with exaggerated emotion and disgusting affectation. He considered Spinoza as a brother atheist. We can well imagine how quickly Spinoza dropped this conceited and pompous jackanapes. At this time, there came to the house on the Paviljoensgracht one, Jean Maximilian Lucas, of whom we know very little in spite of the fact that he became Spinoza's biographer. Presumably he was a physician and the author of a pasquinade against Louis XIV which occasioned a protest from the French legation in the Netherlands. He was the confidential witness of the last years of Spinoza's life, the most reliable observer of his character and of his daily life. Of Spinoza he wrote, "He has laid open to the gaze of the whole world what it had wanted to keep buried. He has found the key to the sanctuary where before his advent only empty mystery had been seen. For this reason, as the man of honor that he is, he cannot live in security. . . . Most of those who have lived in obscurity and without fame will remain veiled in darkness and oblivion. But Baruch Despinoza will live in the memory of all true scholars and in their writings, which are the temple of immortality."

Then there came a father and a son, both named Jan Rieuwertz, and both devoted to the propagation of Spinoza's writings. For many years after Spinoza's death, the younger Rieuwertz preserved the memory and the work of the great thinker in high esteem. But he had to be careful because his works had been proscribed, and he

could only circulate them secretly. He also preserved Spinoza's portraits in his publishing establishment.

A jurist named Hugo Boxel came to Spinoza with strange and agitating questions. He found himself in great spiritual distress. He wanted to know from authentic sources whether there existed such things as apparitions and ghosts. Boxel was no longer young. The new regime which persecuted the followers of the Freedom Party had dismissed him from office. Now he spent his time mulling over such singular questions that Spinoza could only answer ironically, "If the philosophers wish to designate everything which is unknown to them as ghosts, then I would certainly not deny their existence, for there is an endless number of things about which I know nothing."

Entirely different in origin and intellectual importance, both in his life and philosophical attainments, was the young German Count Ehrenfried Walter von Tschirnhaus. He had studied mathematics in Leyden, had been in the war on the Dutch side, and had finally dedicated himself entirely to his studies. More than anything else he was interested in Spinoza's writings, in the new geometrical method and also in the grinding of optical lenses. In 1674 he made Spinoza's acquaintance, an event which became of great importance to both of them. George Hermann Schuller, another German, who lived in Amsterdam and was a physician, was also acquainted with Tschirnhaus. He was not always bright or logical in his thinking, and often occupied his time with alchemistic nonsense. He knew Leibnitz, recommended him to Spinoza and zealously furthered the relations between the two prominent

scholars. And then there were some of the lesser personalities among the learned men of that time who found their way to Spinoza: Saint-Glain, a French refugee who, after Spinoza's death, prepared the first French translation of the "Theological-Political Treatise"; Abraham Johannes Cuffeler, a counsellor who, after Spinoza's death, defended with passionate righteousness both his personality and his life against all attacks; the Rector of the Latin School at the Hague, Louis Limelet, who by the spreading of Spinoza's philosophy aroused the rage of the Church Council at the Hague; a mathematician from Leyden, named Wittichius; and many others.

In September, 1675, came the attack by Spinoza's former pupil, Albert Burgh, who was then living in Florence. Among the unfaithful of Spinoza's circle, this one was certainly the least important, but his attack was the most vicious. It originated from a completely opposite philosophy. For this reason Spinoza was furious and gave him an answer which was not entirely confined to pertinent arguments but represented an outburst of offended feelings. He had already been attacked with all the arguments of theology and politics, but this convert, who had forgotten his scientific education as well as his Protestant past, acted like an Inquisitor and held up the Catholic cross to his master as well as to his country, which more than any other was opposed to Rome. How could Spinoza confine himself to the subject when Burgh, with the voice of a fanatic, cried out to him, "Acknowledge your most evil heresy, desist from the perversion of your nature and be reconciled with the Church!" How could this prospec-

tive monk still hope for an understanding with his home, and for friendship, when he said of the Calvinists and Lutherans, the Mennonites and Socinians, that they were all "as wretched as you are, and, like you, dwell in the shadow of death!" At this, Spinoza's furious and scornful rejoinder burst forth. Thus, in the face of these many attacks, he had been impelled to believe that the whole purpose of the Treatise had been shattered, for the human intelligence was still too heavily shackled. But Burgh had renounced all reason, had even mocked it and was possessed by his new faith, to which he had been converted only a short time before. Spinoza wondered what all this had to do with religion? Burgh spoke about God, but only meant the authority of the Roman Church. Spinoza sharply reprimanded the presumptuous young zealot. In this he was in complete agreement with the relatives of the young convert, who was only twenty-four years old but who was lost to a career which would have corresponded to his family's wishes. He could no longer remain in Holland. In the garb of a Franciscan, he returned to Rome, where he spent the rest of his life behind monastery walls. To be sure, his conviction was sincere. No doubt this change of faith was an attempt to find a way out of the confusion of the times, of which Albert Burgh was a product like all the others.

During these years there was one severance of relations that was more painful than the others. We already know about Henry Oldenburg's life; we know the reasons for the estrangement between him and Spinoza. He had been frightened by the "Theological-Political Treatise";

but he knew the writer, the greatness of his mind and the nobility of his heart. He struggled with this book and tried as far as possible to interpret its meaning in accordance with his own outworn philosophy. Again and again he revised his judgment, and was happy at the prospect that, by deeper study of this book, he might discover a less pernicious meaning than appeared on the surface. It seemed to him that the first opinion he had expressed to his friend had been too precipitous. "But on reconsidering the whole matter more closely many considerations occur to me which tend to persuade me that far from desiring to do injury to true Religion and sound Philosophy, on the contrary, you labor to commend and establish the true object of the Christian Religion and the divine sublimity and excellence of a fruitful philosophy."

Yes, that was it! Oldenburg was convinced of his new truth. His good-natured face beamed with happiness. He pressed his beloved young friend to his heart again. The old companionship would bloom again, bringing warmth to his old age, which had become lonely and sad. He begged his friend to preserve his friendship for him, for after all, he was "the most devoted admirer" of Spinoza's "teaching and virtue."

Spinoza read this letter and was constrained to smile sadly. He understood Oldenburg and was touched by his efforts to find a straw to which their old friendship could still cling. In fact Oldenburg even wanted to circulate the Treatise secretly in London and begged for several copies to be sent over. But he implored Spinoza thenceforth to abandon all remarks which might be misunderstood, and

as the naive pantheism that it was frequently held to be. He insisted that it was entirely mistaken to maintain "that God and Nature (by which is meant a certain mass or corporeal matter) are one and the same."

Spinoza doubted that his views could have the approval of Oldenburg's Christian friends. And there was no denying that good old Oldenburg himself was a devout Christian. After all, he stood on dogmatic ground. True, he understood the religious spirit that was so evident in the Treatise, but he held fast to tradition and dogma, with the security they confer. Spinoza had never been a Christian, nor could he ever become one. He understood Christ as a man only, who had given an example of unique holiness, but who was not the resurrected Son of God. When Oldenburg wrote this last letter but one to Spinoza, his concluding words were "Farewell and continue to love me"; and Spinoza answered, "Farewell, most honored Sir, and believe me yours in all love and devotion." These were not mere expressions of courtesy. They signified a farewell which was bitter for both of them; for it was the end of a deep, heartfelt and beneficent friendship.

In the evening of his life, a strong desire arose in Spinoza to put an end to all misunderstandings and difficulties, to all differences of opinion between himself and others. He tried to forget Velthuysen's attack on the Treatise. He did not wish to persuade his opponents; everyone had a right to his own thoughts, just as he claimed this right for himself. He begged Velthuysen to write down his arguments against the Treatise once again, aware of the purity of his former friend's sentiments and

of the fact that he too was animated by the desire for truth.

After the farewell to Oldenburg, the circle of friends who had once been faithful to Spinoza and had then left him to die alone, was dispersed. From them he had learned everything there was to know of human nature: love and friendship, scorn and inconstancy, hate and malevolence. Among them, Henry Oldenburg had been the best and the most dependable. He did not give up his respect for this friend, nor did he abandon his feeling of friendship for him even after an intellectual communion between them was no longer possible. Spinoza realized now that not only his ideas but also his human experiences were essentially completed. Most of them had been bitter and painful. Now death could come.

II

In November of 1676, Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibnitz came to the Hague, desiring to visit Spinoza. Count Tschirnhaus had arranged the meeting. He had made the acquaintance of his famous compatriot in Paris and had learned to esteem him. His intention was to show Leibnitz Spinoza's unpublished writings. Leibnitz knew the "Tractatus Theologico-Politicus" and had written Spinoza previously about the considerable impression the work had made on him. But in speaking with his acquaintances, he used the current phrases and spoke about "the unbearably impertinent writing . . . the shocking new book on the freedom of philosophical inquiry." After the many un-

pleasant experiences he had undergone with regard to "admirers" of his Treatise, Spinoza had now become distrustful. And what was this young Councillor of the Elector doing in Paris, the capital of all diplomatic secrets and intrigues? No, Tschirnhaus should not lend Spinoza's writings to Leibnitz. Spinoza did not know him and had no faith in this Parisian circle, where at that very time a sharp attack on him was being made by Daniel Huet, a theologian and tutor of the Dauphin.

Leibnitz was so completely possessed by curiosity that he came to the Hague himself. What a contrast between these two men! Leibnitz was twelve years younger than Spinoza. He radiated the splendor of his gay and happy youth, while Spinoza was a dying man who had only four more months to live. Leibnitz looked exactly as one would imagine an elegant young man might look. He was unusually talented, a great scholar, but at the same time one of those urbane gentlemen who were at that time lionized in public life. The contrast in their appearance corresponded to the difference in their philosophic attitudes. Whereas Spinoza had been engaged in deep conflict and meditation for the laborious creation of a great Temple of Truth, Leibnitz was characterized by clear-sighted reflection, by a sovereign mastery of knowledge, by a shrewd, precise formulation of his ideas and by a certain youthful attitude. Leibnitz was indeed a happy man! And at the same time he was a great scholar. His books were witness to this, as well as every word he uttered.

The contrast between the two philosophers was immeasurably great. With Spinoza everything was service,

with Leibnitz everything was command. The one came out of the difficult and holy destiny of the Marranos, the other from a good, middle-class family of Leipzig. Spinoza was almost a pauper. He was a simple artisan. Leibnitz, by the force of his will and his ambition, was a courtier whose world was a grandiose setting of castles and palaces. And Leibnitz was interested in international politics, in the plans and intrigues of sovereigns, in the haughty and cryptic language of diplomats, in the cunningly calculated political struggle for power and domination. For Spinoza politics was something altogether different. It was complete identity between ideas and reality; the desire to create for all men the happiness which comes from a recognition of reason and its rights. For him, people were suffering beings whom we must help, and for whose peace and unity we must fight. Leibnitz judged people by the anecdotes which were told about them, by their position in life, and by their success. He was also fond of women, raved about their charms, and was proud of his conquests. Spinoza led an ascetic life in which the passion for a woman had never been allowed to enter. He had probably never had intimate relations with any woman.

Thus they sat opposite each other in Spinoza's humble chamber, the young German, triumphant, gay, superior, beaming in the sunlight of his success and happiness; Spinoza, troubled, distrustful and insecure in the face of the magnitude of the contrast between them. The streets of the city were wintry and quiet. People were going about their day's work. They spoke of everyday matters

as people talk of something which, although interesting and real, does not involve very much reflection or responsibility. In the house on the Paviljoensgracht, however, the two greatest thinkers of their time sat opposite each other. They spoke of that which was most sacred to each of them, and which would cause both their names to become a part of history for all time. Leibnitz sensed the antagonism directed at him from the other side of the oak table. He wanted to win his opponent over diplomatically—after all his visit had a definite purpose—he also wished to be considerate of Spinoza's feeble health. Spinoza's face told more than he would have confessed to his best friend; it was the face of a dying man. Leibnitz had seen this at once. He decided to speak of himself and of his experiences. Perhaps that would cheer Spinoza's spirit and also give him more confidence in himself. Leibnitz, in spite of his youth, understood the human soul. He was proud of his psychological insight.

He told of his childhood in Leipzig, of his school and university days, of his humanistic education which had opened the world of classical antiquity to the boy, and of his legal and philosophical studies. His most important teacher had been that same Jacob Thomasius, who in 1670 had declared that the author of the "Theological-Political Treatise" was an obscurantist writer, a slanderous ex-Jew, and a thorough atheist. Spinoza was obliged to recall this while his visitor spoke enthusiastically of his teacher. When only fifteen years old, Leibnitz had taken his Copernican step. "I remember," he stated, "that I was walking alone in the Rosental, a small wood

near Leipzig, trying to make up my mind whether I should retain my notion of the substantial forms. Finally, the mechanical theory won out, which led me to the study of the mathematical sciences." Thus the boy had already surmounted Aristotelian philosophy after having studied Bacon, Descartes, Kepler, and Galileo. At the end of his studies he decided that he would not follow an academic career. The world of the scholars was too narrow, their careers too limited and monotonous. Leibnitz needed a wide, adventurous world; he needed stormy times into which he could plunge like a powerful swimmer.

Slowly Spinoza's distrust disappeared as he realized that this young visitor was, at any rate, honest. He listened to him with interest. How incredibly swift was the rise of such commanding personalities! Leibnitz had entered the service of the Elector of Mainz, to whom he had been recommended as a jurist. The Elector was a devout Catholic, but he was not prejudiced against his new counsellor because he was a Protestant. And Leibnitz was by no means anti-Catholic. In fact, Leibnitz's pet idea was to reunite the two Churches and thus do away with the cause of religious conflict. But he was also a good patriot and alert to the dangers which threatened Germany from France. He conceived a grandiose political scheme by which France would be diverted from Germany and Europe: she was to begin a holy war against the Turks and conquer Egypt; then Germany would not be menaced any longer. Leibnitz went to Paris in 1672 in order to promote his scheme at the court of Louis XIV. He thought that he could make the French rulers enthusiastic about

his scheme, hoping that they would not see through his diplomatic mental reservations. But he was disappointed. No one would even discuss it with him. Not until the advent of Napoleon was it to be realized.

But Leibnitz was in Paris, the capital of the world, the metropolis of art and science; and he gained entrance into the most powerful court of those times. Colbert, the great minister of Finance, dominated the political scene. He engaged Tschirnhaus to tutor his son in mathematics. The talents of the young German count were soon well known in Paris. Leibnitz was also prepossessed in his favor and became his friend. Thus he lived for several years in Paris. He became acquainted with all the personalities at court and circulated among the learned, speaking and writing the language of the country perfectly. His successes were many. But much as Leibnitz was fascinated by Paris, yet he knew that the world was still larger. He wished to visit and study other capitals as well, and to find out if his lucky star would remain true to him. In 1673, he travelled to London, intending to stay only for a few months; then he planned to return to the home of his choice. In London, too, his success was astonishing. He became a member of the Royal Society, was befriended by Henry Oldenburg, and became acquainted with the new natural science of Newton and Boyle. After returning to Paris, he succeeded in making his greatest mathematical discovery, differential and integral calculus. Independently of him, Newton presented the same new method. Bitterly both scholars fought for the right of primacy. The strife

was never abandoned, and it embittered them both immeasurably.

Thus Leibnitz continued to live in Paris year after year, at the same time remaining in the service of the Elector of Mainz. That their relations had steadily deteriorated and a break was near at hand was clear to everyone. At this point, Duke Johann Friedrich of Hanover offered him a post as counsellor and librarian. He accepted and left Paris. But he planned his return trip via Holland, so that he could finally meet Spinoza.

Spinoza listened intently to this narrative. He considered how young and successful Leibnitz was. Could serious studies come out of such a life? For Spinoza, research was a kind of divine service; it required piety and humility. Among the many qualities which Leibnitz possessed, these would certainly not be found. And yet, their conversation had demonstrated that a great philosopher had come to visit Spinoza.

Before coming to the Hague, Leibnitz had spent four weeks in Amsterdam trying to persuade Spinoza to see him. In the German homeland he had long ago considered Spinoza one of the greatest Cartesians, and had expressed this opinion to his teacher, Thomasius. When the "Treatise" and his teacher's harsh refutation had appeared, he had hastened to read the proscribed book. Johann Georg Graevius, a professor at Utrecht, who knew both Spinoza and Leibnitz, had written to the latter in April, 1671, about this "highly pernicious" book and its destiny. But his study of the "Treatise" and the general antagonism

it provoked had filled Leibnitz with an ever increasing desire to make closer contact with Spinoza.

Now he had attained this goal, and after he had recounted all his personal experiences, he was also able to speak to Spinoza about the important scholarly questions of the times. One problem which interested them both and which had first been brought up by Descartes, was the problem of physical motion. About this problem both thinkers were quickly in accord, as they both considered that the Cartesian solution would not stand the test. Then the discussion went on to metaphysics. They discussed the idea of a Sublime Being. Here they touched upon the very heart of Spinoza's philosophy, and at this point he waxed ardent. Leibnitz, however, was only amazed as he saw the beauty and religious depth of Spinoza's ideas, but he considered them "full of paradoxes." In any case, the walls between the two men had been torn down, and Spinoza had overcome his distrust completely. Now he was ready to afford his guest an opportunity to glance at his "Ethics." Leibnitz's heart leapt up; he had attained his goal. What Tschirnhaus had been unable to guarantee in Paris, Spinoza was doing of his own volition. He showed Leibnitz the thick manuscript of his major work. Indeed, Spinoza was really won over by this young courtier whom he had mistrusted at first. He sensed his guest's genius as he had also sensed the genius of Jan de Witt. He felt that he must speak of the latter and, with the deepest emotion, he related for the first time the happenings of the night of the murder, when his overwhelming

emotion had broken through the solid walls of his reason and his solitude.

When Leibnitz left Spinoza, he took with him the memory of a great experience. He had encountered a great mind, perhaps the greatest living at that time, and a character such as could only be equaled in the legends of the saints. But for Leibnitz reality was based entirely on success and victory, on fantasy and adventure; moral qualities did not count for much. Hence, Leibnitz was very little concerned whether or not he would ever reach the greatness of character of the recluse who lived in the Paviljoensgracht.

III

Leibnitz skimmed through the pages of Spinoza's life work as the Master himself expounded his ideas. They bent their heads over this manuscript which was to go to the world after his death, as the greatest legacy of his mind.

This work was actually the synthesis of the seventeenth century. In it all the tensions of the era were released, all the warring powers were bound together in unity. Rationalism and mysticism, method and imagination, absolutism and liberty, mathematical order and cosmic breadth, aristocracy and democracy: here the spirit of the Baroque had created for itself a vast and magnificent abode. Leibnitz saw the perfection of this logical work of art; he saw the final resolution of the century's

tensions which he, too, had been curiously observing. The intense passions which were discharged in the form of dissension and war, and on the other hand, in the profound and painful struggle with God, were freed from all earthly obscurity in a clear aura of abstract thought. In lucid, masterful form, a lofty edifice of thought had been erected. Leibnitz was deeply stirred by its power, but he also saw the difference between these and his own thoughts, which expressed the difference between their two characters and destinies. His subjectiveness, intensified by his extreme personal pride, hindered him from seeing this philosophy in any other light than in relation to his own.

He did not speak of this to Spinoza, to this dying man, whose genius affected him deeply. But away from the sphere of Spinoza's attraction, he confessed his objections. "I find in it many beautiful thoughts that coincide with my own . . . but there are also paradoxes which I do not consider either true or even likely." Yet he recognized the closeness of his own philosophical world to that of Spinoza's. He was almost a real Spinozist, and was also considered as such. Only later, when his own system had assumed more definite form, did he again bid farewell to this relationship. "You know that formerly I went a little too far, and that I was close to adhering to the side of the Spinozists, who attribute to God an infinite power only, without conceding completeness and wisdom to Him, and who, while paying scant attention to the investigation of final causes, trace back everything to an unreasonable necessity. But the new views I have since acquired have cured me of all this."

After all, Leibnitz was in a different spiritual camp and also in a different historical setting. In Spinoza the philosophy of the Baroque had reached its peak. In Leibnitz there was already arising the spirit of the eighteenth century, which allowed the free air of the individualistic spirit of the Renaissance to flow into the strong world of natural law, state absolutism and mathematical certainty. Spinoza had accomplished a great synthesis and had created a model of God in geometrical order. Leibnitz envisioned a different philosophical world containing the harmonious play of free forces and the system of pre-established harmony. His was an analysis of the world rather than a synthesis. This, above all, was the contrast between Spinoza and Leibnitz. It was also the antithesis between the Baroque and the Age of Enlightenment; for the older man's unity lay in a clear, mathematical structure transcending individual entities, whereas for the younger, unity consisted in the manifold aspect of single, particular and individual phenomena. "We understand a thing all the better when we understand its parts and the parts of its parts."

For Spinoza, there existed no possibility of various interpretations of things; there could be only the one, the true knowledge. But Leibnitz smilingly acknowledged, "It is wonderful; I approve almost everything I read, for I know very well in how many different ways things can be understood; and thus, as I read, many things come to my attention which either condone the writer or justify him." It might be said that Leibnitz's world was richer and more flourishing; but Spinoza's world was more earnest and

more severe. The static world of Spinoza became a dynamic world to Leibnitz.

A vague presentiment of these conceptions arose in Leibnitz while he was reading Spinoza's "Ethics." How great this man was in his unshakable belief in the divine truth! How difficult and austere he had made his life in order to arrive at this goal, renouncing everything which meant happiness to others! "And that which is rarely encountered must be difficult," Spinoza had said. He believed he had found that which is so difficult—the knowledge of God and a blissful life. The peace of the wise man was in Spinoza; external causes could no longer disturb the contentment of his heart. The wise man lives in awareness of himself, of God and of things, in accordance with eternal necessity. That was the conclusion of Spinoza's philosophy. That was the human meaning of his message of salvation which, in language by no means prophetic, echoes through the centuries, continually exerting its appeal and being heard, and yet always in opposition to the tendency of times and of men.

The content of Spinoza's "Ethics" has been stated and commented upon thousands of times. Erected as a firm, scientific structure, this work almost involuntarily transcends the limits of knowledge. It recreates the pattern of a religious philosophy which is not knowledge but wisdom. The fundamentally ethical and religious tenor of the "Ethics" signified a resurgence of the ancient spiritual forces of Judaism. During the seventeenth century in the Netherlands the need for metaphysics was even greater than the need for science. The parallel to this thirst for

metaphysics can only be found in Rembrandt. The title, "Ethics," may at first arouse surprise because the work is a complete system and not merely a philosophy of morals. However, the title is fully justified, for the aim and culmination of Spinoza's system consists of ethical and religious ideas. The intellectual love of God—*amor dei intellectualis*—is the eternity of the mind. We should be intensely suffused and permeated with this love. "It cannot be clouded by the emotion of envy nor by the emotion of jealousy; but, on the contrary, it will be cherished the more, the more men we imagine enjoying it."

The "Ethics" is built up of five major parts. The first part is a kind of cosmology in which the conceptions of God and Nature, substance, attributes and modes are firmly established. God is the effective cause of all things, and the absolute first cause. Contrary to church doctrine, He is incorporeal and not "a director of nature endowed with human freedom," who rules the world simply for the advantage of men so that He can bind them to Himself. "Whence it has come about that each individual has devised a different manner in his own mind for the worship of God, that God may love him above the rest and direct the whole of nature for the gratification of his blind cupidity and insatiable avarice." From the knowledge of the essence of God there follows the knowledge of the human soul. The second part of the "Ethics" contains Spinoza's psychology. It is an abstract theory of ideas, a theory of the three kinds of cognition: conception, reason and intuitive knowledge. The third and fourth parts deal with the psychology of the emotions, and are also devel-

oped on a basis of pure theory independent of experience or observation. The world of desires, joys and sorrows is presented and subjected to ethical criticism. To free ourselves from the evil emotions means to embark upon the road leading to reason and signifies the victory of the good emotions. The fifth part of the work, in connection with the theory of the emotions, elucidates the ethical goal of the love of God. It is equally the goal of truth as well as human freedom and moral conduct. There is no good and evil in the sense of absolute dogma. Morality lies in the individual himself, in a clear understanding of the nature of his emotions and of his reason. It is in rational knowledge that we find our happiness, and both bless us in our intellectual love of God. This love is common to all people. It is a good which we desire so that all may rejoice in it.

The free man who recognizes the good emotions, obeys reason and realizes the love of God, fulfills the ideal of a virtuous conduct of life. By means of psychological, metaphysical and ethical proofs, Spinoza's "Ethics" returns to its religious and metaphysical starting point. Thus is the circle rounded, the pattern completed and the spiritual form perfected which constitute the content both of a philosophy and of a life. Two hundred and ninety-five propositions, like pillars, support this gigantic structure. Over and over again the geometrical presentation is interrupted by annotations which also disclose a certain release of feeling which Spinoza might have wished to suppress, but which nevertheless constitutes the secret of his thinking.

He worked at his "Ethics" for fifteen years. The "Short Treatise" had represented the very beginning of this work. In the supplement to the "Short Treatise" the geometrical method had already been employed, and in the Treatise on Descartes' principles it had been further developed. In the "Ethics" the method was brought to completion. By 1665 the work was nearly done but was once again revised, particularly in the parts dealing with the ethics proper. In 1675 it was finally finished and ready for printing. Then Spinoza suddenly came to the decision to give his major work a different destiny, that is, to allow it to be published only after his death, and even then anonymously. In the very year of his death, 1677, his friends published the Latin version, and soon after, the Dutch translation.

No matter how judgments may vary concerning Spinoza's philosophy, and no matter how many of his ideas seem to have become antiquated, yet some of his individual discoveries are sublime and enduring. Spinoza's conceptions of matter and attributes, often modified and often contradicted, have entered into the history of philosophy. His parallel attributes of thought and dimension and their relations to substance are a most significant attempt toward the solution of the body-soul problem. We could not do without Spinoza's psychological theories, no matter how different the aspect of psychology may be today. But the ethical character of the work is that of its creator. He provides an example for the whole world, an example such as only the great religious attitudes can offer. Leibnitz had also spoken of Spinoza's "perfectly exemplary

life." The wisdom of this way of life is expressed in the "Ethics."

However, the work has an even greater significance. The liberation of philosophy from theology, often tried, and carried to the last step but one without that last step being hazarded, has here actually been accomplished. Even Bacon, Descartes and Leibnitz were not fully able to free themselves from theological authority. Only Spinoza accomplished this mission which the spirit of the Renaissance had imposed upon history; only Spinoza conquered for reason a realm of its own. Only thus were pure philosophy and science possible, independent of all theological dogma and the power of the Church. Much as the theories of subsequent philosophers may vary, they were all made possible only by Spinoza's act of liberation. He accomplished his mission and he sacrificed himself to it. He did it with joy and without any sense of tragedy.

Ludwig Feuerbach said of Spinoza that he was the emancipator of reason in the new era. This emancipation also gave to the world a new experience of God, an experience redeemed from dogma and superstition, from empty verbiage and fatuity. To be sure, Spinoza was no religious creator, no Moses, Jesus, Paul or Luther. He was not the herald of a new religion; for that, his conception of God was too abstract, too much bound up with mathematical speculation. But he broke the shackles of superstition and outworn tradition on behalf of philosophy. God was no longer an image of man, and our relation to Him was no longer fashioned after the relations of human society. The slave no longer prayed to a Master; nor did the son pray

to a Father; but it was rather the human being who prayed to a universal, ethical and metaphysical essence encompassing all existence. "Oh, Soul of the World, come and infuse us!" Goethe's religious experience, yearning for "him who creates and created all," originated in Spinoza.

The "Ethics" more than any other philosophical work laid the foundation for the force of reason. Now, of course, reason is not the only force in human life, nor should it be. But it is only reason that provides us with the truth about our existence and about natural law; it is our only security in the vast and fearful anarchy of life. Obviously, religion and art are different from reason; and reason is not the only fulfilment of our human nature. But it is the strongest force in human nature, incessantly working, striving and creating to enlighten and ennoble the destiny of this painful earth.

Spit upon this grave! Here lies Spinoza. Would that his words were buried with him! Then the spiritual plague would end its ravages.

—CAROLUS TUINMAN,
Preacher in Middelburg

CHAPTER TEN

Consummation

I

ON THE sixth of February, 1677, Hermann Schuller wrote to Leibnitz, "I fear that Mr. Benedictus Spinoza will soon leave us, as the consumption, an hereditary disease in his family, seems to grow worse every day."

Schuller was not only one of the closest and most sincere of Spinoza's friends but he was also a physician. Hence he saw what the others did not see or did not wish to see. As a diagnostician, he believed that Spinoza's long illness, his twenty years of dying, was an inheritance from his mother. How strange! Spinoza had scarcely known his mother; he had lost her in his earliest childhood; but she had bequeathed her death to him. And then, too, his lungs had been destroyed by the glass dust floating about his room, tiny particles of scintillating dust that could only be seen against the sunlight. Spinoza himself sensed that his end was near, but even now he did not speak of it. His face became increasingly paler, more transparent and more youthful. Looking like a sick boy, he left his bed

with great difficulty, and he continued his occupation day after day. He had to fight hard against his weakness in order to complete his daily work. Often he was overcome by fainting spells; often his coughing seemed about to strangle him; and the weakness of his limbs was so great that he had to grasp the bed posts to keep himself from falling. He did not make a last will and testament; that would have been too sentimental; and besides there was too little for him to bequeath to anyone. But he had confided in Hendrik van der Spyk, his landlord, and had begged him to send all his manuscripts to Jan Rieuwertz in Amsterdam. Rieuwertz would manage his spiritual legacy well, and would publish it when the proper time came.

Baruch Spinoza was not afraid of death. As long as he was still alive, as long as he worked, death was not there, and all premonitions of death were conquered by thoughts of life. "The free man thinks of nothing less than death; and his wisdom consists not in meditation on death, but in meditation on life." Thus Spinoza himself had lived, and thus, even now, he meditated on life, for he wanted to die like a free man. He had also taught that the greater and clearer our knowledge of the soul is, the less formidable is death, and the more we love God. And that was how he loved God, Whose Name was on all lips, for Whose favor people haggled and cheated each other, and Whose love was so hard to understand. *Amor dei intellectualis:* it had made Spinoza's life light and happy, a life that to others seemed so harrowing and miserable. His was not the happiness of possession, nor of success,

nor yet of the gratification of desires, but the happiness of the sage who, freed from lusts, conscious of himself, of God and of things, was always in possession of true spiritual peace. Thus the dying man looked back upon his life quietly and serenely, and smiled that smile which raises the wise man above life and death.

When the news of Spinoza's serious illness spread abroad, the inquisitive ceased their visits. They had wanted to see the living monster in order to speak about their impressions, but a dying man did not interest them. Hence Spinoza remained alone with his hosts and the few friends who were left to him. Now and then Doctor Schuller came over from Amsterdam to give him medical advice. People spoke in hushed voices in Spinoza's presence, and no noise was permitted to disturb him. It did him good to have people act kindly to him, and to be spared the hideous clamor of the outside world.

But his adversaries had by no means quieted down. The news of the dying condition of their enemy did not frighten them. The Church also fights dying men and even dead men, when the welfare of its flock is at stake. The Consistory of the Hague was just getting ready for its greatest blow. The proscription of Spinoza's books had not been sufficient. They planned to drag this *Benedictus,* who was for them a *Maledictus,* before a tribunal, and by having him imprisoned, render him harmless for all time. But a different sentence was pronounced by the tribunal of history, not against him whose name was Baruch but against those who had degraded the holiness of their office by attempting to enslave a free spirit.

Once more Spinoza looked upon his earthly world: the poor, bare room, scarcely warmed by the little stove; the bed inherited from his father; his instruments, his books, his few belongings. In most of the other houses of this city there were many more possessions. Riches and luxury were widespread. Was death therefore different for the rich than for him? It was good to die with empty hands. When the soul is attached to possessions, then it is no longer free, and does not enter cheerfully into the mystery of the great God-Nature. Dying should not be different from living. With Spinoza both dying and living were modest and quiet, pure and sublime. Thus had it been desired by destiny, and thus had it been desired by himself.

A few days before his death, his feverish hands hastily opened the stove door and crammed into the stove some closely written sheets which the world was never to read. Once again the holiest heritage of his race had came to life in him. He had wished to transmit the Jewish *mythos* to his country in a different and more popular version than the one hitherto known there. Hence he had begun to translate the Old Testament into Dutch; but as he felt that his strength would not hold out long enough, he destroyed the fragment.

No one was to have the even tenor of his life disturbed on account of his death. He altered nothing in his habits. The evening before he died, he went down to his hosts—they did not notice how wearily he descended the little staircase—and listened to them as they recounted the last sermon of their Lutheran preacher. Then, panting heavily, he mounted the steps again and lay down to rest. The

next day Dr. Schuller came to see him and prescribed a broth for his dinner, which the sick man ate with pleasure. The doctor remained at his bedside, holding his hand. The patient's voice grew ever weaker; his breath became ever more gasping and labored, until the stillness of the humble room was entirely absorbed in him, and he entirely in the stillness of the room. Gently and lightly, death bent over the narrow bed, in which Michael Despinoza had also died. The face of the dead man was no paler than it had been when he was alive. His color merged with the color of the pillow, into which his small head had sunk as his soul had entered into God's love. The final truth which he had sought now radiated forth from this small bed into the infinite reaches of time and eternity.

Baruch Spinoza died on the 21st of February, 1677. Four days later he was buried in a rented grave of the New Church, quite near the grave of Jan de Witt. Many people of the city followed the coffin. Some friends came from Amsterdam to accompany him silently on this last journey, just as they had accompanied him in life, silently listening to his voice.

In the house of the deceased, Hendrik van der Spyk kept watch so that his poor belongings in the two small rooms might not be disturbed. He sent for a notary so as to have an inventory made. There were only a bed, some cushions and covers, pieces of furniture, a few clothes, the grinding wheel, the optical instruments and the books. Like shades of another world, with uneasy and covetous faces, Spinoza's relatives, Rebecca Despinoza and Daniel de Caceras, made their appearance. Since the time when

Baruch had left the house of his parents, he had been forgotten by his relatives, and they by him. Now his stepsister and nephew came forward in order to inherit from him, and to make a part of their lives, the only things whose value they could understand. How Spinoza would have smiled if he could have seen them then. When they learned how small the inheritance was, and the fact that, after the payment of all debts, there would be nothing left for them, they renounced all their claims.

The public auction brought three hundred and ninety-two Guilders, after all deductions. That was the value of the material estate that Spinoza left behind. His intellectual estate was in the hands of his friends. They knew that they held in their hands more than merely unprinted manuscripts, more even than Spinoza's life work, namely his life itself, which would endure far beyond death.

The administration of the estate, however, was difficult, for Spinoza's death had by no means diminished the enmity against him. The publishing of his manuscripts was as much a self-evident duty as it was a great danger. His friends put their heads together, took counsel and reflected. They discarded suggestion after suggestion, made new ones, and finally reached an impasse. Spinoza had been an intellectual leader. Would it not be advisable then to deliver his legacy to a man who was also an intellectual leader, and who at the same time, was pursuing a philosophy along the same lines? That was the solution which they gladly accepted and which Herman Schuller was to carry out.

On the 26th of February, 1677, Schuller wrote to

Leibnitz, "I cannot withhold the news, least of all from you, that our greatly esteemed and brilliant Spinoza died on the 21st of February of a violent seizure. It seems that a deadly weakness attacked him quite suddenly, for he left us without leaving a will or testament to establish his last wishes. The "Ethics" which you saw in his house, written in his own handwriting, is in safe keeping in the hands of a friend, and is for sale, if a decent price for this great work (I believe 150 Guilders) could be secured. For the time being, I intend to speak of this to no one but yourself, for you are acquainted with the book and your Prince would most likely be easily persuaded to have it purchased at his own expense."

Spinoza's friends believed this to be a very good idea. They were convinced that Leibnitz would soon inform them of the purchase of the "Ethics" for the ducal library in Hanover. But the answer was delayed, and misgivings arose in the circle of Spinoza's friends. Was Leibnitz really Spinoza's heir? His irresolute character was known, his harsh words against the "Theological-Political Treatise" were also known. And would not the sale constitute the burying of Spinoza's life work? Their misgivings became greater, and finally caused Schuller to withdraw his offer.

Spinoza's friends summoned up courage, and determined to find a way which would be worthy of the departed philosopher and would correspond to his intentions. Even if the odious outcry of rage should break out again, even if all the venom and irrationality of the multitude should again rise up against Spinoza, his wishes

demanded that the legacy should reach the public. Once again his mind was to penetrate into the consciousness of the century now drawing to a close. Once again his message was to lead a reluctant world into a new century and toward a new condition of humanity in which freedom would be the highest law, and reason the gentlest ruler. Then, at last, the blessing of Baruch would be fulfilled, and the love of God would descend to earth.

In the published "Ethics" Spinoza's image was to assume a new form. It would be the image of an unyielding, humble and yet proud seeker of the truth; the image of a man who had been banished in order to become free, who had loosened all fetters in order to bind himself with all his soul to the service of the spirit. It would be the image of a son of men, who suffered and yet was happy, who was alone and yet lived in close accord with humanity, simply yet magnanimously pursuing his quiet, earthly existence. Since he had entered a path leading to an early end in order to become what he was to be, his image is that of a spiritual hero. The effect of his ideas convulsed the ages. To this very day his ideas are engaged in the relentless struggle against outworn traditions. The greatest effect, however, derived from his own personality, from his lofty existence. For always the greatest accomplishment of the human spirit is man himself.

II

The works which Spinoza completed after the "Ethics" were written toward the end of a busy life. His hands had

not yet learned how to lie idle. He still pottered around, busying himself about the household. And besides, there was always need for betterment and renewal in the mental furniture of his household. Necessities arose that had to be satisfied in leisure hours. Spinoza interested himself in the science of his time, and in the new questions that arose. Again and again he faced the great political problems. From his turntable and his desk he turned his eyes toward the restless and shaken contemporary scene.

These late works were brought to light by his friends. There were annotations on the "Theological-Political Treatise," and a compendious grammar of the Hebrew language, which was the first attempt to write a philosophical grammar of the Biblical language. There was the "Treatise on the Rainbow" (long considered lost), in which he agreed with Descartes, and tried to calculate mathematically the path of light rays refracted in rain drops. Of all these posthumous works the most important was the "Political Treatise."

It was an attempt (left unfinished) to construct a political science based on the spirit of Spinozistic philosophy. This political science had two points of departure: the ideas of the "Theological-Political Treatise" and the experience of a radically altered present. The criticism of theological views formed the core of the Treatise; the political viewpoints were only developed as its consequence. But the sequence of these ideas demanded a systematic presentation, a political philosophy such as was being attempted by all factions at this time of great

change. Therefore, it was not a question of practical politics, nor of intervention in the struggles for power, nor of propaganda for any of the programs of any one party. On the other hand, it was self-evident that the personal views of the writer regarding political theory should also be expressed. That was true of Hobbes as well as of Spinoza.

Above all, however, the political situation of the times required a clear interpretation. For the Netherlands this situation meant the end of the Republic. Her greatest leader had been murdered. The movement for liberty had also been annihilated. The forces of opposition had been victorious along the whole line. The Republic had now become only a flag fluttering in the wind, tattered, impotent and ridiculed. In such a situation the politician is obliged to ask, "What must I do to redeem my power?" The philosopher of history, however, wants to know the reasons for the situation, the reasons for the actual occurrences as well as the reasons for the ideas which had been defeated. It is clear that in spite of the attempt to be as objective as possible, the effect of such an investigation is always a political one. Coming to understand the reasons of a catastrophe also becomes an instructive lesson for the future. And that, too, is politics.

Spinoza never actually wrote a philosophy of history. He never dealt in particular with the problem of history. But he believed in natural law, and held that history should be the realization of the idea of justice. Thus there arose for him, above all, the question of the State's form,

a question which was of such decisive significance for the Republic in those critical years. But Spinoza also considers the State's content.

From Spinoza's philosophy and also from many statements during his lifetime it had always been clear that he was a republican and always democratic. His ideas on politics were the same as those of Jan de Witt. The experiences gained during de Witt's rule, and perhaps also conversations held with him, were embodied in the "Political Treatise." In the political field, too, the Netherlands Baroque had wished to achieve a great synthesis between aristocracy and democracy. Jan de Witt had been an aristocrat through and through, by origin as well as by intellectual superiority. But he governed and lived for the people, who nevertheless remained alien to him. The catastrophe of 1672 also marked the catastrophe of this attempted synthesis. That the people did not stand behind his liberal constitution, that they abandoned the liberal Regents and went over to the House of Orange, caused the end of this democracy under aristocratic leadership. Spinoza was always opposed to the House of Orange because he believed them to be not only the protectors of orthodoxy, but at the same time opponents of all free thought and belief. The result was that the contrast between the two parties finally symbolized for him the greater contrast between the new spirit and the old. For this reason, the downfall of the Republic presented itself to him as an all the more terrible occurrence.

Like Jan de Witt, Spinoza desired an aristocratic leadership for democracy. That was the law of his intel-

lectual stature and of his solitude. But the realization of this aristocratic idea had been too one-sided and too narrow in the Netherlands. At the summit of Netherlands society stood the patriciate of the commoners carefully guarding their position of power and their privileges. If a man like Jan de Witt could emerge from such a social stratum, it was a great creative act on the part of history. But politicians from other social strata could not attain to power. The absolute liberation of all creative capacities, the right to leadership of any suitable person, the belief in the human being regardless of his origin—these democratic ideas had not as yet been materialized. They became the roots of a liberalism that did not come into power until a hundred years later. Spinoza had a presentiment of such a form of government and was among its first harbingers. And thus, even in his political ideas he went far beyond the conceptions of his own epoch, and had in mind a new conception of the State. The actual theory of the State in the Baroque period originated with Thomas Hobbes. No greater contrast could be imagined than that between his teachings and those of Spinoza.

Hobbes denied the existence of an innate social instinct in man. His idea was that man is asocial and that life is a war waged by all men against each other. The task of the State is to force people into a peaceful community life, as they are incapable of accomplishing this by themselves. Therefore he demanded the renunciation by individuals of many personal rights, according them protection and peace in recompense for their state of subjugation. All authority should be vested in the State; it was the "Leviathan"

which swallowed the individual. For this reason, Hobbes' ideal state was the absolute monarchy.

For Hobbes the great goal was security, but for Spinoza there were also liberty and intellect. Hobbes demanded absolute power for the State, Spinoza desired a liberal democracy. Hobbes was a monarchist, Spinoza a republican. But Spinoza's republicanism did not mean dogmas, slogans and parties to him. Again Spinoza did not take his subject lightly; he did not make decisions with a simple pro or con. He examined the constitutions of democracies, monarchies and aristocracies, and implicitly allowed the actualities of contemporary experience to enter into these investigations. He did not wish to announce anything startlingly new; he was not a revolutionary. He wished to demonstrate "only such things as best agree with practice." His aim was to "investigate the subject matter of this science with the same freedom of spirit as we generally use in mathematics." It was his endeavor "not to mock, lament, or execrate, but to understand human actions!" In this he was in accord with Hobbes, who saw the great virtue of the State in security, in the same way that freedom of the mind is the virtue of each individual. But the essence of the State must be laws suited to the nature and character of its citizens.

Thus Spinoza acknowledged his adherence to natural right, by which he meant the laws of nature itself, the natural right of each and every individual. Whether a man pays heed to reason or to desire, his actions are always in accordance with his nature. This fact every political science should bear in mind. But a person is really free only when

he follows his reason, for only then is he led to act of necessity through causes which are based on his own nature. "For liberty does not take away the necessity of acting, but assumes it."

To be sure, the right of the commonwealth precedes the right of the individual. "This right, which is determined by the power of the multitude, is generally called Dominion (Imperium). And generally speaking, that individual holds dominion absolutely to whom are entrusted by common consent the affairs of state." This democratic assumption is applicable to all forms of government. For this reason, the difference between democracy, aristocracy and monarchy is only the difference in degree as to the participation of the whole people in the government. A government which is not based on the will of the people at all was not even contemplated by Spinoza.

He desired a free democracy, but he did not identify it with any special constitution. The power of government should never be vested in one man. It had often been pointed out that the countries with dictatorial rulers underwent the fewest changes and were less transitory than the democracies. But after all, was a peace, arrived at only by a rule of force, worthy of human beings? Confronted with this question, Spinoza's passionate love of freedom burst forth. "Yet if slavery, barbarism, and desolation are to be called peace, men can have no worse misfortune. No doubt there are frequently more numerous and sharper quarrels between parents and children than between masters and slaves; yet it advances not the art of husbandry to change a father's right into a right of

property, and to count children merely as slaves. It is slavery then and not peace that is furthered by handing over the whole authority to one man. For peace, as we said before, consists not in the mere absence of war, but in the union and concord of minds."

Impartially and clearly Spinoza examined the various forms of government from this point of view of concord and the will of the people. The aristocratic republic was the really new form of State conceived by the Baroque period and established in the Italian City Republics as well as in the Netherlands. Here also the final goal was democracy, "for if there be any absolute dominion, it is, in fact, that which is held by an entire multitude." Moreover, under an aristocratic dominion the people should have little to fear, and their liberty should be that of the whole State. In Holland, this aristocratic republic foundered because unity between the people and the leaders could not be achieved. Only in this one instance did Spinoza take a stand with regard to the institutions of his homeland, and he reproved the Dutch for the fact that, although they had set themselves free from a monarchical government, and had cut off the head of the body politic, they had given no thought to its reorganization. Was it then to be wondered at that the citizens of the Republic did not know in whose hands the power of government actually lay? The number of those actually in possession of authority had been too few for them to be able to exercise firm control. And hence their opponents had become too powerful, and had brought about the downfall of the Republic. Since democracy represents only the

most extreme form of government by the people, which can be developed either in an aristocracy or in a monarchy, hence the question of a constitution is in fact only a question of suffrage. The "Political Treatise" raised this question, but the answer was never given. Death interrupted the work forever.

This Treatise was therefore the fragmentary legacy of a political philosophy which was by no means fragmentary as such. The Treatise was also governed by the idea of unity. Here it is the unity between the government and the people, between nature and reason, between freedom and necessity. Spinoza knew that the State whose rise and fall he had witnessed did not represent the final realization of this ideal. Was such a realization at all possible? The answer to this can only be given by world history. And its answers have never been satisfactory.

Spinoza's political philosophy is closely related to his "Theological-Political Treatise" and his "Ethics." These three works, taken as a whole, represent both an abstract and a practical philosophy. They are organically bound together by his life and his invariable philosophical attitude. Spinoza's opponents knew this. They had drawn this conclusion when they had prosecuted the "Theological-Political Treatise" and had achieved its suppression. Their intention was the same with regard to the posthumous works. Spinoza dead was no less dangerous than Spinoza alive.

The friends who had had the posthumous works published had not complied completely with Spinoza's wish for anonymity. He himself had declared in the "Ethics,"

"for he who desires to aid others either by word or deed so that they may enjoy the greatest good—he will least of all strive to have his doctrine named after him." In the preface to the "Opera Posthuma" the friends had repeated this sentence, but they had also inserted a short biography and the initials B. d.S. in the beginning of the book, so that there could no longer be any question as to anonymity. They did this for the love they bore their friend, whose portrait they had inserted into the later editions as an embellishment. They desired to carry out his wishes, and at the same time erect a monument to his memory.

Was it this unsuccessful anonymity that had marshalled Spinoza's foes so quickly upon the battle field? They came with their old weapons, their old battle-cries, their old shouts of unreasoning fanaticism and hatred concealing their fear. Reverence for a great man who was dead did not enter their minds. His living ideas were to be combatted. The peace of his grave was not to be spared.

Among the first to scream out the old charges of godlessness and hellish wickedness was the philologist, Johann Georg Graevius. "Through the centuries the world has never seen anything more pernicious . . . oh ye gods, save the world from this pestilence!" A few weeks after this outburst of indignation by an individual a demand was made by the whole Consistory of Leyden for the suppression of this "harmful and poisonous" work. The order for the suppression came quickly. There was hardly any resistance left, for another wind was blowing in this

country now. On the 25th of June, 1678, the "Opera Posthuma" was suppressed because this book contained many "unholy, blasphemous and godless doctrines." Again Spinoza's humble convictions were publicly calumniated as a product of every evil. Again the highest ethical conceptions were dragged through the mud, and the life work of a great thinker was held in such low esteem that it was considered sufficient to take legal measures for its annihilation. These measures were executed with the greatest severity under the reactionary government of the Orange party. Even eighty years afterwards, an Amsterdam book-seller was punished with a heavy fine for having dared to sell the "Opera Posthuma."

It was the theologians who still carried on this battle. Christian Kortholt of Kiel was the most violent of them all, expressing the wish that the philosophy of Spinoza, which was an insult to God, might be cast into hellfire. The philosophers had always shown great reserve, most of them being already affiliated with the Cartesian camp. There was only one inglorious but powerful exception who came from France. He was Pierre Bayle, one of the most ambiguous figures in the history of ideas in the 17th century. Perhaps this was the reason why he was so influential. Bayle initiated a violent agitation of ignorance and bigotry. He had vainly sought a middle way between free-thinking and orthodox religiosity, between skepticism and faith. And now he made the most asinine and incomprehensible charges against Spinoza, charges which the anti-Spinozists of all lands kept repeating for a hundred years. Voltaire also ridiculed "the little Jew with the long nose"

and called the "Ethics" a "disastrous book." But the great change in all opinions could not be held back much longer.

It is true that the eighteenth century was not entirely free from slander and imprecation against Spinoza. But those who uttered them were not heralds of a new era, but heirs of an outworn one. The change in the esteem accorded to Spinoza, which was now taking place, raised the ostracized and scorned man to the heights of a saint. And this change did not affect him alone. The world had altered its aspect and now looked at Spinoza with different eyes. The Baroque had been the epoch of struggle, of religious wars and of the Counter-Reformation, which was by no means an affair of Catholicism alone, but also lent to Protestantism and to Judaism an inquisitorial and orthodox attitude. At the end of this struggle, the eighteenth century ushered in victory and peace. Now at last the Reformation could be completely adhered to and its legacy could be acquired in the northern countries. This realization of the Reformation above all meant freedom for the spirit and freedom for religion; it meant the recognition of and the right to antithesis: the right to reason and to religion, the right to freedom and to security, the right to individuality as well as to community. In the eighteenth century Lessing had approached closer to the true spirit of the Reformation than any other European of the seventeenth century. Lessing and the spirit of the Enlightenment tried to advance the Reformation and to realize the ideal of a new world religion which would unite the requirements of the human heart with the results of human reason.

expressed his feelings in words of jubilant revelation and deepest enthusiasm. "He was penetrated by the lofty world-spirit, by infinity, because his beginning and his end were the Universe, his one and eternal love; in saintly innocence and deep humility he mirrored himself in an eternal world, and observed that he too was its most lovable mirror; he was deeply religious and imbued with the Holy Spirit; and it is for this reason that he stands alone and unattainable, master of his art, but exalted above its profane practitioners, without disciples and without civic rights."

III

Spinoza was one of Goethe's greatest experiences. It was not the geometrical method, nor the rigorous, immutable pattern, nor any individual ideas that aroused this deep impression. Academic philosophy was never of great interest to Goethe. "As much philosophy as I shall need until my death, I am in possession of; but, as a matter of fact, I do not need any at all." But he saw in Spinoza the expression of intellectual freedom, the tendency against the theologians and the outlook of a new religious spirit which would be richer and more liberal than one based on dogma.

To Goethe, grown old, the "Ethics" served as a breviary, a kind of "old haven." Whereas in his youth, Spinoza's veiled mysticism and religious yearning had constituted his great experience, later on it was rather the

contrary. "I found here a calming influence for my emotions; it seemed to me as though a great and free outlook on the sensual and moral state of the world had been disclosed to my eyes. But what particularly allied me with him was the infinite selflessness which shone forth from every one of his sentences." Thus, for Goethe, Spinoza was an affirmation and a compensation at the same time, Prometheus and Epimetheus, Faust and Mephisto, striving and restlessness, yearning and fulfilment. However, Spinoza was more than that; he was the embodiment of a new human ideal. This ideal is capable of controlling all the spheres of life. It shapes the character of free scholars who recognize no dependence other than that of truth. It defines the way of life for all men who can lightheartedly renounce material possessions, and feel richer in a poor cell than in a palace, because they are freer. It shines over the democracies and their institutions, which no longer have the task of ruling their citizens as slaves, but whose mission it is to serve them so that life might be better, more just, and happier. But, above all, Spinoza became the leading figure of a new religious spirit in which God was no longer merely a subject for theological dogma and empty ceremony but the highest pinnacle of a world system in which nature and intelligence, faith and knowledge, were all united. In this idea of God, all conflicts of earthly existence are resolved.

All religious revival and all seeking for God in the last few centuries have their prototype in Spinoza. A renewed Judaism as well as a renewed Christianity meet

in him. Even a mystic like the Russian, Vladimir Soloviev, was able to admit, "The comprehension of God which Spinoza's philosophy gives us, in spite of all its incompleteness and imperfections, corresponds to the first and indispensable demand of a real worship of God and an immersion in the Divine wisdom. Many religious people have found spiritual support in this philosophy."

And, indeed, there is no more profound religious confession than this axiom of the "Ethics"—"Whatever is, is in God, and nothing can exist or be conceived without God." Thoughts such as these infused the spirit of a rebellious youth. The Danish author, Georg Brandes, wrote, "Spinoza is the saint of thought as Shelley is the saint of poetry."

In the Anglo-Saxon world Spinoza's influence was felt very early, particularly in the field of religion. In 1799, Samuel Taylor Coleridge spoke of "my Spinozism." He regarded Spinoza as the "Ararat" of modern philosophy. About this religious significance he remarked, "When Christ spoke of his identity with the Father, he spoke in a truly pantheistic or Spinozistic sense."

This influence also spread over to America. But here it was found that still another motif existed in Spinoza's philosophy, a motif which corresponded so much to American character and history. It was the deep desire for order in liberty and the feeling of personal responsibility for the community. This conception of Spinoza recurs in the acknowledgment of a modern American, Frederick I. E. Woodbridge. "Few philosophers have had the sense of order as supremely as Spinoza had it. It overpowered

him and set him all atremble. Ostracised by society and ill with consumption, he could rest in it as in the embrace of God's love. The beauty of it in him for a modern reader lies in his freedom from epistemology and the confusions of subjectivism."

For the philosopher Spinoza had established reason as a new and firm foundation. In philosophy, too, history means change and transformation. Hence it was also inevitable that the path of modern thought should diverge from the one conceived by Spinoza. But Hegel said, "Spinoza is the pivot of modern philosophy."

His personality, his example as a human being, had even more influence than his theories. His work belongs to the history of European ideas; but he himself became a legend. And the legendary story of a man is always greater than his actual accomplishments. It changes time into eternity, a life into a paragon, and a man into a saint.

The name of one such man was Baruch Spinoza. He bore the spiritual burden of his century on his shoulders, and carried it to Golgotha. Curses, mockery and threats accompanied him on his painful way. He did not deviate from the path which he judged the right one. In self-immolation he smilingly endured lies and abuse. He preached faith in reason, and experienced the hatred of all those who had cause to fear this faith.

His legend is that of a faithful servant of God. It is as painful and as pure as the human mind itself. It renews our heritage and prepares our way. It sanctifies the ground on which dreams and struggles have taken place

in every age. It allows those hands which have suffered martyrdom for the sake of ideas to fold themselves in prayer. Then they spread themselves out wide and implore the love of God for all men.

That is the legend of Baruch, the blessed.

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